

Reflections

Volume 51

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International Catholic Family Newsletter

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The Attack on Family Time Together

Christendom is Under Attack

Our Lady of La Altagracia

Blessed Mother's 15 Reasons to Pray the Rosary

Blessings to All:

Over the last few years, I have seen a growing tendency among adults and children becoming smart phone *zombies*. You even see it at church more and more. Children and adults have their smart phones out checking messages and browsing during Mass.



You see it at restaurants. You see it when



people are driving with the smart phone in their hands. How about the car in front of you not moving when the light turns green?



To honk or not to honk, that is the question? Oh well.... **Honk..Honk..Honk**





Just the other day, my wife and I were having lunch at a popular restaurant and next to us was a family of 5 children of different ages and their parents. Everyone of them was busy looking at their phones and

no one was talking. Glued to their phones! *No family time!* The distraction of the smart phone is stealing valuable family time.



The smart phone is not a bad thing, it just depends who is the boss. You or the phone?

It should be a family rule, that when the family members sit down to eat, whether at home or in a restaurant, the phones must be put away. *Don't be timid about this....moms and dads are the rule makers....not the phones.*



Most teens have smart phones and many 8-years old and younger have them too. So, how much time do you think they spend on their smart phones.? A decade ago, the average time spent on them was about 90 minutes a day. Today it is over 3 hours and

more for some teens.

Why is family time so important to our children and to our moral fabric? Because we parents are the ones who teach our children about life and provide guidance on the right and wrong in life. No doubt, that the smart phones are here to stay. So,

the more time you can spend with your children without smart phones stealing your family time, is valuable time well spent. Set down some rules in your family and explain when smart phones can be used and not used.

AG Barr blasts 'militant secularists' in speech on religious freedom



Attorney General William Barr blasted "militant secularists" and their attacks on Judeo-Christian values in a blistering speech at Notre Dame Friday, October 14, 2019, saying "religion has been under increasing attack" over the past five

decades. Barr, a devout Catholic, told students and faculty at the university's law school that "the problem is not that religion is being forced on others, the problem is that irreligion is being forced — secular values are being forced on people of faith."

"Among the militant secularists are many so-called progressives," he said. "But where is the progress? We are told we are living in a post-Christian era, but what has replaced the Judeo-Christian moral system? What is it that can fill the spiritual void in the hearts of the individual person? And what is the system of values that can sustain human social life?"

Barr contends that many of society's ills are caused because of the breakdown of religion in society.

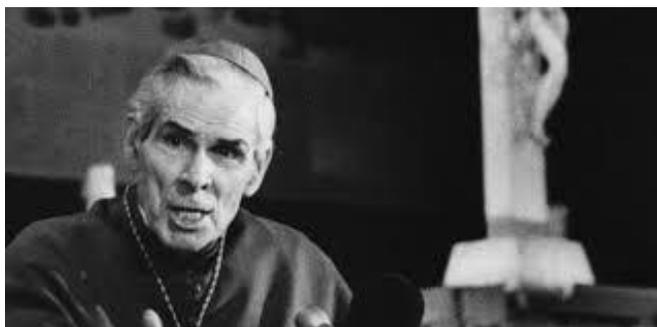
"This is not decay," he said. *"This is organized destruction. Secular forces and their allies have marshaled all the forces of mass communication, popular culture, the entertainment industry, and academia, in an unremitting assault on religion and*

traditional values." Barr said "ground zero" for the attacks is the schools. I can assure you that as long as I am attorney general, the Department of Justice will be at the forefront of this effort, ready to fight for the most cherished of all American liberties: the freedom to live according to our faith," he concluded.

Archbishop Sheen's Warning of a Crisis in Christendom

With a saintly long-ranging spiritual vision, Bishop Sheen saw the roots of today's crisis firmly planted and growing in 1974 but gave us an antidote.

"We are at the end of Christendom," Archbishop Fulton Sheen once said. "Not Christianity,



not the Church, but [Christendom]. What is Christendom? Christendom is economic, political, social life as inspired by Christian principles. We're seeing it die. Look at the symptoms. Break-up of the Family, Divorce. Abortion. Immorality. He reminded that of 22 civilizations that have decayed since the

beginning of the world, 19 rotted and perished from within.

"We live in it from day to day, and we do not see the decline." Remember, that was in 1974. "We take it for granted—we get used to things, and almost accept them as the rule." Despite the decline blaring today, isn't that a rule? How many Catholics accept the counter message to *Humanae Vitae*?

Sheen pointed out *"the press that we read, the television that we see, is in no instance inspired by Christian principles. As a matter of fact, there is, on the part of many of us, the tendency to go down to meet the world — not to lift the world up. We are afraid of being unpopular — so we go with the mob."*

The good bishop noted we were living in the fourth 500-year period of Church history, explaining "the Church is not a continuing thing — it dies and rises again. It proceeds on the principle of Christ himself as priest and victim.

"And there comes the defeat, the seeming decay, we are put in the grave, and then we rise again. We have had four deaths in our Christian history."

First Three Falls and Rises



The first time the Church was in dire straits was in the fall of Rome, the first 500-year period. It had a rebirth when great saint missionaries like Augustine in England and Patrick in Ireland spread the faith.

Then came a second "decay" around the year 1,000 with the Moslem invasions and the split of the Church with a schism in Constantinople.

"It seemed to be the end of everything. And then we came to life again," Sheen said.

In the third 500-year period he said the Church became "rotten" as nuns and priests were defecting. Then came the reformers who "almost always reform the wrong things. And they began reforming the faith, and there was nothing wrong with faith — it was the morals that needed to be reformed. It's not renewal — it's really a moral reformation that is needed today, too."

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All the more so in our day. On just one point, how many listened to, and took to heart, *Humanae Vitae*? Even theologians defected from it.

After that period the Church came to life again, Sheen said.

"And now we're at the fourth period, and we're rotting — we're spoiled — no great zeal, no great learning, no great fire." Yet there's hope because "anyone who knows history is not particularly disturbed."

Church's Enemies

"But the enemy in each of the 500-year periods has been separate and distinct," he continued. "We had, and here I am speaking generally of enemies within the Church, in the first 500 years, false doctrine centering around the person of Christ...the Christological heresies. So, the Church was just split open, and that was one of the reasons that made it possible for the Moslems to develop."

The next period saw attacks on the head of the Church, leading to the Eastern Church breaking away.

By the 16th century the attack was on "the body of Christ, the mystical body, the Church." It was Reformation time.

Today's 4th Enemy

"Our enemy today is the world — the spirit of the world," Sheen made clear.

"Today we have to conform to the world, or we're branded" he said. *Must be politically correct.* "Our Lord said, *I have taken you out of the world.* We say, 'No we have to win the world, and to win it you have to be one with it.' Our Lord says, *I pray not for the world.* He was praying for the spirit of the world. And this is the easiest kind of way to fall off the log — worldliness. It's so simple, and it can be justified for a thousand reasons; namely, the Vatican Council said we have to go into the world — indeed, but not to be world, which is quite a different matter. So, this is our attack today."

Sheen saw this as "one of the basic causes of our degeneration, of our death. We're dying. What about it? What's the answer?"

"The answer is: these are great and wonderful days in which to be alive. I thank God... that I can live in these days, because these are days of testing." ***Since 1974 the testing pressure has increased.***

Sheen explained it was easy to be Christian in the three decades before his talk. "The atmosphere was Christian; morals were Christian; there was no great problem in adapting ourselves to a Christian society. But now, when everything is turned around, these are days when the masks have got to come off, and we reveal ourselves just as we really are."

"Today the current is against us. And today the mood of the world is, 'Go with the world, go with the spirit.' Listen, dead bodies float downstream. Only live bodies resist the current. And so, the good Lord is testing us."

"And he is testing Western Christians with worldliness, and how many of us are falling?" Would Bishop Sheen be surprised on how far the decadence and corruption have piled up?

He gives the example of the Israelites being tested by God in the desert. "That is what he is doing to us. We are showing what we really are now," Sheen said. "St. John says in his Epistle: 'They did not love us really from the beginning. That is

why they left us.’ And so, the souls that are falling away have just failed to meet the test. It is very much like the test that the Jews had.”

The farsighted bishop highlighted how the majority of Israelites scouting the Promised Land told the people they couldn’t enter because the dwellers there were too strong. But “the majority is not always right!” Only Caleb and Joshua, “the minority report,” disagreed. They were right.

Sheen warned “what we are going to have in the Church is a minority report: a minority report of sisters, a minority report of priests, a minority report of laity — not the minority that is aggressive and troublemaking, but the minority that like Caleb and Joshua, trusts in God. So, we are tested just as the Jews were tested.”

He went on, “not far after our time, and perhaps in the time of some, then will come the battles and the testing. Our Lord said, *Satan would sift you as wheat*. And we are being sifted as wheat. So, we can all thank God that we live in these days. Really, it’s beautiful. Now we can say, ‘aye’ or ‘nay,’ and we can bear up under assault, criticism and ridicule, because this is the lot of the Christian in the days of the spirit of the world.”

Surprising, Unexpected Advice

The saintly bishop made clear the situation was really not “gloomy.”

Why? Because “it is a picture of the Church in the midst of increasing opposition from the world. And, therefore, live your lives in the full consciousness of this hour of testing, and rally close to the heart of Christ.” Be the “minority.”

He observed how when the Church drops things, the world picks them up but twists them in the wrong way. For example, mysticism drops, and the young turn to pharmaceuticals and drugs. Although smart phones were not around in Sheen’s day, they occupy more of our time and provide instant gratification for our senses.

Isn’t he right on today’s beam? What’s the usual first response? More government spending and more laws will fix the problem. Uh huh.

Sheen explained, “Our Blessed Lord said *I have come to bring the sword*. Not peace! We are always talking about peace, peace, peace! Yes, because that war (World War II, Korean War, etc.) happened — but we aren’t making war in ourselves — and there’s not going to be any peace in the world until we make war. Our Lord said, *I came not to bring peace, but the sword!* He never used the word ‘peace’ until after Easter.”

“The Lord brought a sword. It’s not the sword that’s thrust outward against the enemy. It’s a sword that’s thrust against ourselves, cutting out the seven pallbearers of the soul: pride and covetousness and lust and anger, envy, gluttony and sloth. And we’ve given up the sword — someone else has taken it up, and we have to restore it! Then we’ll get peace! And peace is never corporate — it’s never social — until it’s first individual.

Social peace, world peace, is the extension of individual peace in our hearts. When we are right with God, then we will be right with our fellow man. When we are not right with God, then we will be wrong with everyone else.”

Archbishop Sheen emphasized, “The Lord is keeping reserves. He is training us. We’ll make the entry. We’ll prepare for a new Church. A new Spirit is coming to awaken Christians all over the world. The silent prayer warriors with the help of the Mother of Jesus is leading the way. She is gathering apostles for this time of testing. Be aware of the danger that is trying to steal the souls of our youth. Don’t listen to the lies of the enemy. The forces of darkness are turning morals upside down. The slaughter of the innocent is the new blood being shed across the world. The time to wake up is NOW. **Pray, Pray, Pray**, is a message repeated by Our Blessed Mother in Medjugorje.

Patroness of the Dominican Republic and Haiti

Virgin de la Altagracia



Virgin de la Altagracia is the Patroness of the island of Hispaniola, the island containing the nations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic (some sources list her as the Protector of the Dominican Republic, rather than Patroness). As such, she is the Patroness (Protector) of the Archdiocesan La Sagrada Familia, located in the Azua region of the Dominican Republic. The image shown (at right) is from a stained glass window in the main parish chapel in La Sagrada Familia.

History of the Image:

The image of the Virgin de la Altagracia “Virgin of Highest Grace” has long been venerated in the Extremadura region of Spain. It has existed on the Caribbean Island of Hispaniola since the early 1500’s,

when two Spanish brothers carried her image with them to their new home in Higüey, located in the southeastern corner of the island.



The story goes that an old mysterious man gave the image, in an almost miraculous way, to a father for his daughter who had requested it. The image later disappeared from the house and reappeared in a blossoming orange tree. This occurred several times.

These events were interpreted to mean that the image did not belong to one family, but to all Dominicans and should be displayed publicly in the local parish. A larger temple was dedicated in 1572 and the current Basilica in 1972 to display the image of the "Highest Grace" or Divine Maternity.

A portrait of the Virgin Mary in a Nativity scene. It is 13 inches (33 centimeters) wide by 18 inches (45 centimeters) high and is painted on cloth. It is a primitive work of the Spanish school, painted c.1500. The Spanish brothers Alfonso and Antonio Trejo, two of the first European settlers on Santo Domingo, brought the portrait to the island some time prior to 1502, and eventually donated it to the parish church at Higüey.

Its first shrine was finished in 1572, and in 1971 it was moved to its present Basilica. The image was crowned on 15 August 1922 during the pontificate of Pius XI. Due to its age, centuries of handling by the faithful, and exposure to candle smoke, it was in sad shape, and was restored in 1978. On 25 January 1979 by Pope John Paul II crowned the image with a gold and silver tiara, his gift to the Virgin. Its frame is made of gold, enamel and precious stones, and was constructed by an unknown 18th century artisan.

Further Description:

The image, encompassing the Holy Family, is the Nativity scene:

- Jesus in the manger (naked and poor in his humanity; asleep, but he will rise)
- Mother Mary with a ray of light "white as snow" (adorned with stars and crowned; veiled as the virgin bride) with hands in prayer, clearly plays the central role

- Saint Joseph with a candle (in the background as he is only the adopted father of Jesus; haloed for his sanctity; offering light as a service)
- The star of the Magi (God; light; guide) and
- The dark, cave-like background (the world in sin).

According to the current bishop of Higüey, the holy image is an icon, a book of symbols and colors, rich in wisdom, in which the Dominicans can read the truths of their faith.

Veneration:

The Basilica in Higüey is the site of great pilgrimages by worshippers of Our Lady of Altagracia, who come yearly on January 21, her feast day, to the shrine in search of physical health as well as spiritual well-being. Every day many witnesses of the extraordinary divine action of Altagracia arrive at the Basilica to thank her. Even greater numbers come to make a "promise," a pact where they will perform a particular form of penance if the Virgin will answer their prayer.

Basílica de Nuestra Señora de la Altagracia



This massive structure in **Higüey, Dominican Republic** is to honor the Virgin of Altagracia, national patron saint of the country

Why You Should Pray the Rosary Daily: 15 Reasons Straight From Our Lady



The Rosary is arguably the most recognizable Catholic devotion. Sadly, it is a devotion that has fallen out of fashion for many Catholics. This is deeply unfortunate, as the Rosary is one of the most powerful weapons in our arsenal for spiritual warfare and one of the greatest aids in the pursuit of a fruitful spiritual life.

Among the most common excuses for failing to pray the Rosary one hears are that it's "boring" or that it takes too much time. What many Catholics aren't aware of, however, are the benefits – promises from Our Lady herself – associated with its faithful recitation.



A History of the Rosary

While the specifics are unclear, tradition and the Church hold that Our Lady appeared to St. Dominic and Blessed Alan de la Roche sometime in the 13th century to impart the devotion of the Rosary. The monks of the time had already developed the habit of praying the psalter – all 150 Psalms daily recited by memory. Mary gave the Rosary to these two spiritual sons to promote the habit of daily prayer among all the faithful, not just those in the religious life.

Mary's Promises for Daily Devotion

The most amazing thing about the Rosary is that Mary made *15 promises* to those who recite it daily. These aren't insignificant promises, but rather enormously helpful graces provided to those who are trying to live a good and faithful Catholic life:

1. To all those who shall pray my Rosary devoutly, I promise my special protection and great graces.
2. Those who shall persevere in the recitation of my Rosary will receive signal graces.
3. The Rosary will be a very powerful armor against Hell; it will destroy vice, deliver from sin, and dispel heresy.
4. The Rosary will make virtue and good works flourish and will obtain for souls the most abundant divine mercies. It will draw the hearts of men from the love of the world and its vanities and will lift them to the desire of eternal things. Oh, that souls would sanctify themselves by this means.
5. Those who trust themselves to me through the Rosary will not perish.
6. Whoever recites my Rosary devoutly, reflecting on the mysteries, shall never be overwhelmed by misfortune. He will not experience the anger of God nor will he perish by an unprovided death. The sinner will be converted; the just will persevere in grace and merit eternal life.
7. Those truly devoted to my Rosary shall not die without the sacraments of the Church.
8. Those who are faithful to recite my Rosary shall have during their life and at their death the light of God and the plenitude of His graces and will share in the merits of the blessed.
9. I will deliver promptly from Purgatory souls devoted to my Rosary.
10. True children of my Rosary will enjoy great glory in Heaven.
11. What you shall ask through my Rosary you shall obtain.
12. To those who propagate my Rosary I promise aid in all their necessities.
13. I have obtained from my Son that all the members of the Rosary Confraternity shall have as their intercessors, in life and in death, the entire celestial court.

14. Those who recite my Rosary faithfully are my beloved children, the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ.

15. Devotion to my Rosary is a special sign of predestination.

Mary, who is our true spiritual Mother, always desires what is best for us. She who was conceived without sin and sits as the Queen of Heaven and Earth enjoys a will that is in perfect unity with the will of God. What she wants for us is nothing less than what He wants. And He who made us knows precisely what we need to do to do the work He has assigned us, and the surest path home to Him.

These promises of Mary show us how the rosary serves as a spiritual weapon that every soldier for Christ and His Church needs to fight successfully in the spiritual battle that comprises much of our earthly sojourn. Those who trust in the Rosary and are faithful to Mary through it will have access to many additional graces that those who choose not to pray it won't. Graces we desperately need to help us make it through the narrow gate that leads to heaven.

Why You Should Pray the Rosary Daily

In addition to the 15 promises that Mary herself gave; I would offer some additional reasons for praying the Rosary daily that are taken from my own personal experience.

Daily recitation of the Rosary will help you get to know your Mother better. By getting to know Mary better, you will in turn get to know Jesus better. When you look at each mystery of the Rosary, you reflect upon different aspects of Jesus' life through the eyes of His mother. Mothers know and see their children much differently than others do.



Because the Rosary was given to us by Mary, it has great power. There have been many miracles associated with praying the Rosary. Our Lady of Fatima mentioned that the main reason for the loss of souls into the fiery abyss of Hell is that no one is praying for them. When you pray, you can offer up your Rosary for a particular intention, whether it be for the conversion of souls or for an end to abortion

Finally, the battle between Heaven and Hell is real. The Rosary has a special power against evil. Satan hates Mary with all of his might. Through Mary and her Magnificat, her "yes" to God, we have Our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have our salvation, if we choose to accept it. Demons know and fear the Rosary. Blessed Pope Pius IX said, "Give

me an army saying the Rosary and I will conquer the world." This is how powerful the Rosary is. St. Francis de Sales, the great master of the spiritual life, wrote, "The greatest method of prayer is praying the Rosary."

And of course, Our Lady of Fatima said, "Pray the Rosary daily."

The Rosary is one of the most powerful weapons that we have against Satan and his minions. It will help to ward off temptations. Prayed together with the family, it will create a locus of stability and peace in the home. There are also a number of indulgences attached to the Rosary, which can bring about the remission of temporal punishment due to us even if we die in a state of grace. If there is any reason why the Rosary is not recited as often today as it was in the past, you can be certain that Satan himself is behind it.



**Pray the Rosary for Your Family
Ask the Mother of Jesus to Intercede
For Your Intentions.
Mary, Mother of Jesus, Help Us.
Mary, Trusted God, And So Should You.**

Six Reasons Why You Should Trust God

- 1. He knows your by name. Isaiah 43:1**
- 2. He will fight for you. Exodus 14:14**
- 3. He thinks about you. Psalms 139:17**
- 4. He has plans for you. Jeremiah 29:11**
- 5. He is your refuge. Psalms 62:6-8**
- 6. He is always with you. Mathew 28:20**

*Help me to walk in your light,
and live my life in faith and glory.*



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Our mission statement is to motivate people to pray and to be Christian examples in their work, home and with others, for those needing the Light in a world of Darkness.

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Pray the Rosary Daily to Save Souls

