

resurrection of society in the power of the New Spirit.

One Christian king shall keep the earth.

Mede shall no more be the master, as at present,
But love and lowliness and loyalty shall together

Be masters of mankind and maintain Truth . . . etc.

But before this fortune befall men they shall find the worst.

(*Passus III, 406-455.*)

In an evil age Mechtilde of Magdeburg and Joachim of Flora had prophesied a new era of grace. The followers of Joachim, indeed, the spiritual Franciscans, had been led by the prophecy into excesses and even heresy. But every age has its evils and it is useless to look forward to future betterment, trusting in politicians and plans, unless each individual is prepared to shoulder the responsibility of these very evils and so enter into the cell of self-knowledge and being thus converted help, by a holy life, in the salvation of the people.

ROSARY SUNDAY

BY

VINCENT McNABB, O.P.

The Holy Gospel according to St Matthew, chapter 22

... And the Pharisees being gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, "What think ye of Christ: whose son is he?" They say to him, "David's".

I HAVE to speak to you tonight about the holy Rosary. There are, of course, ten thousand things to be said about it, the least of which is a glorious battle on which probably depended the civilisation of the world; but I am going to allow a little child to lead me and you into the Rosary.

There are not many trees in London streets, but there are a great number of children—better than trees of course—and God, in his goodness, often allows little children to hail me. The other day I was passing through one of our streets, close at hand, made beautiful with the feet of little children and their gambols, and two little ones I found suddenly by my side. I think they must have crossed the little narrow street; I don't know. I only know that suddenly I found two little ones by my side. I think their aggregate age would be about six. I imagine the lesser of the two was not quite two and he had towards the elder one that natural sense of guidance which of course might be the salvation of a world in ruins. But the elder of the two began, as so many children have done before, and I hope will do again, began to search at my Rosary-side for my beads.

(I shall never forget till I die, the first time I went out to Regent's Park on Good Friday to read out the death of Jesus. There was no one there when I began, but soon there was a little child toying with my beads.)

So the little man the other day began searching for my beads that were hidden beneath my cloak and scapular. I took the beads out, but then he darted to that (the crucifix). It was not just the beads he wanted: it was that; and he said firmly and hastily—as I imagine in the olden days men said the *Credo* when they were going to be martyred—he said to me, to himself, and to the little one, 'That is God: kiss him'.

That is God: Kiss him! Did you ever hear anything like that? No wonder that our blessed Lord says 'from the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise'. (*Mat.* 21:16.) Not even St Thomas Aquinas in his higher flights of accuracy could have said it in the *Tantum Ergo*. He has not said it in the *Adoro te devote*; but it was said here by a child. 'That is God: Kiss him'. It was not idolatry: the child knew it was an image. No doubt when he went home and saw some picture of his father or his mother he would say: 'That is Father: That is Mother'. 'That is God: Kiss him'.

So he kissed him, and I kissed him, and then he turned round to the little one that was just startled by the accost, and the little one was so small that he could not quite reach up to the cross at my belt, so I knelt down in the London streets when a small London child kissed God. It is worth while having a Rosary at your belt when that great thing can be wrought in the streets of London.

London is not Whitehall. London is not the Universe. That is London, or London is dead.

'What think ye of Christ?' 'God', said the little one. That is what they should have said when Jesus asked them, putting almost the answer into their mouth: 'What think ye of Christ, whose son is he,' He never said that to Peter, when Peter came and said, 'Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God'. But of course not flesh and blood had revealed it to Peter but his Father in Heaven—and our dear Lord almost put the answer in their mouth, 'What do you think, whose son is he?' They answered smartly with an historical answer. They were quite acquainted with the history of their own nation, and when men have given up profound thinking they seek for culture in history—in data.

It was true but not sufficient, and when something is true and not sufficient you are wrong if you think it is sufficient. He was David's son, but he was also the Son of God. Sometimes I go to speak of the Son of God to some of those, his brethren according to the flesh, and they will hardly even confess that he is the son of David. They will say that he is almost a child of sin—of *sin*—and they don't know that in saying that they are making their own race outcast in the whole world; for if he is a child of sin and not the child of God, then the Hebrew people have committed the world's greatest crime, for Jesus Christ the Son of God is either the greatest glory of Israel or their greatest shame. Every

one that took him out into the world was of that race. Peter and James and John and Paul—they were all of that race, and if that race, knowing they took out into the world a child of sin, a man that was not God, knowingly—then they should be suspected for the rest of time. No crime has ever been committed like that; but, of course, we who are the true Jews, we hold that this thing in our hands which seems a kind of shame is the greatest glory of the chosen people.

Ah! dear children, it is only in the home of Peter, where Jesus dwelt, that you have a full confession that Jesus Christ is not only son of David, but Son of God. Do you think the son of David would ever have redeemed the world? David's victories were those of the battlefield. David with his own smooth pebbles from the brook, and, alas! with Goliath's sword, slew Goliath. David the great conqueror and the adulterer, could only bring still greater ruin in the world, and the Redeemer had to be of the stock of David to cleanse it, but of the stock of God to redeem it.

Now, dear brethren, that little child's accurate statement of what the Rosary is might almost shock the modern mind even in this land—for we are commemorating today a victory on sea which was achieved in the councils of God, through this great prayer of the divinity of Christ. In 1571, when Protestantism had as it were finally fixed its frontiers in Europe, it was necessary to save the world. Protestantism could not save it. There were many well-intentioned persons within the frontiers of those sects, but in point of fact they had really given up the divinity of Jesus Christ, because they had given up the divinity of his great work, the Church. God's work stands: Man's work falls. But when they gave up the idea of a great visible church with authority, they had implicitly given up the child's answer: 'That is God', and it has now taken some 300 years (getting on for 400 years) to work that out to its uttermost conclusions, and it is a very sad thing to see that the conclusions are being worked out almost on a world-wide scale. They are invading us in almost every sphere of life; they meet us at every turn of the street. Perhaps in a few years that little one that has made a most glorious confession of faith will be blaspheming, will be caught up into the current of denial and will think that the Bride of Christ is some harlot set up by the pride or the ignorance or the ambition of man.

But whilst the Rosary is used in the Catholic Church, there will be taught throughout it that that is God. God came our way. The Good Samaritan was none other than the Son of God, equal with the Father, eternal in his begetting, his divine begetting; and this child of Bethlehem and Nazareth was God's eternal Son.

With what different eyes, then, we shall look out on the world, if we carry this thing about us! This school of learning—this university of all sound teaching. What is there that this does not teach you? Its Joyful Mysteries will teach you to prepare for life.

which really means this, that if you teach us to pray right, prayer will teach us all that is worth learning: and in the five Joyful Mysteries you will be taught the value of life and how to prepare for it. You will be taken to the little home at Nazareth and you will see one of the least of the little highland maidens, and you will see a glorious saint and an ambassador from God. The enlightened 'minds' think it a very little thing, but God's ambassadors come today and tell us that in its relation to the divine life it is a very great thing.

Then you will be taught about suffering and sorrow. What does the world—the modern world—know about suffering and sorrow? In its anxiety to end it, it is increasing it. The modern world, poor bewildered thing, on which I have great compassion, seeing suffering round about does nothing better really than try to hack its way out. It does not understand it, it creates it: but when Jesus came into the world he added sorrow to no one. He dried tears, and though most graciously he says that he came not to send peace but the sword, it was not his sword, it was theirs. They drew out the sword and he most courteously seemed to accept the responsibility almost of their sin. So that it will teach you all about sorrow and he, as the holy man says, he that has not suffered, what does he know?

But it will not end with suffering, just as Calvary does not finish on Good Friday. The Calvary that is enshrined in our souls as we say these beads is the Calvary of Easter morning, when tears are wiped from eyes and sorrow and sin are no more, and I will not say, that the earth is smiling with a mere earthly smile—the smile that was on the summer sea and the morning hills, and the dew-impearl'd leaf of grass; but with this smile of Heaven, redolent of Paradise—with Heaven's smile because God has come into our midst.

I hardly dare do what the little one asked me to do, and yet I think—as a child shall lead us both—I think I shall make profession of faith that if my God has come into this world so full of love to me that he has cleansed my feet with his kisses, wiped them with the tresses of his head, and if I may use that sacred word made more sacred by the lips—the innocent lips—of the little child: 'That is my God and I will kiss him!'

(Rosary Sunday, 1933.)