

THE UNIVERSAL LIVING ROSARY ASSOCIATION

International Center for Eastern Europe/Ukraine-Russia

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GLORY BE TO JESUS CHRIST!

Dear Members, Benefactors and Apostles,

In the Byzantine Liturgical year, there are four major Penitential Seasons: the Great Fast of Lent (40 days), the Apostles Fast (length varies), the Nativity Fast (40 days) and the Dormition Fast (2 weeks). Simple fasting is observed on every Friday of the year. During the Great Fast of Lent, the 8th Sunday before Pascha (Easter) is the last day meat may be taken, and the 7th Sunday before Pascha is the last day dairy products may be taken. Essentially, at this point, Eastern Catholics are eating as vegetarians. For the most part during Lent, only one meal is taken during the day and, on Saturdays and Sundays, two meals are allowed. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, fasting is encouraged for those who are able, and those who cannot, may take bread and water.



This strict Fast is made in reparation for the sins of mankind and to fortify ourselves with the courage and strength that will be needed to take our place with Our Blessed Mother at the foot of the Cross. Christ's entire Life was directed to its goal, Calvary, the consummation of the mission with which the Father had entrusted Him. The Crucifixion might appear to those looking upon Him as the clearest proof of defeat. Yet, it is no defeat but victory! Mary saw everything: the humiliation and desolation of her Son, the scorn, derision and hate of those calling for His Blood. No human being ever suffered any agony which could even be compared with Mary's. The sword foretold by Simeon long ago was now a bloody reality: ***"Thy own soul a sword shall pierce!"***

One cannot speak of the ***"Tragedy"*** of Calvary because there can be no tragedy in relation to Jesus and Mary. The fulfillment of God's Will can never be tragic. Tragedy presupposes a blind and cruel fate which is indifferent to man's suffering. No one can suggest that God did not love the Blessed Virgin. Nevertheless, He did not exempt her from Calvary. It is foolish in a Christian, unpardonably foolish, to think that, if God really loves us, as He does, He will exempt us from the cross, the very sign of a Christian! There are many Christians who flee from the Cross as from the devil; they are ignorant of the Cross and lack any brotherhood whatsoever with Christ. Mary could have remained in the intimacy of her home; her presence did not relieve the suffering and humiliation of Jesus. The Virgin Mary identified herself with her Son, her love made her suffer with Him. She loved Him and love unites. Mary's love could not stand separation. Even in that terrible moment, She preferred suffering to separation, however great the suffering might be. There is a precise relationship between our capacity to love and to suffer. He who is not capable of suffering is incapable of loving! We love God to the same extent that we love the Cross. Mary stood at the foot of the Cross of her Son participating actively and intimately in the Sacrifice, identifying herself completely with Him and agreeing willingly, like Jesus, to the fulfillment of the Will of the Father. Mary drank the chalice to the dregs as She saw before her eyes the Life of her Son, whom She had carried in her womb, completely extinguished. Mary loved and accepted the Will of the Father even at the cost of the Life of her Son. She did not watch like a helpless soul, her participation was active. She did not beg for mercy for Him, She made no effort to change the course of events, but accepted them all with respect and reverence. Mary gave Him to the Will of the Father, Jesus gave Himself. For this reason, the Church calls Our Blessed Mother, Co-Redemptrix. Mary's faith was greater and more heroic than any other human being in the world. Pain is not only visited upon those who sin. The innocent suffer also, because we are all members of the Mystical Body of Christ.

**“WOMAN, BEHOLD THY SON!
SON, BEHOLD THY MOTHER!”**

God entrusted to us His very own mother! From all eternity, it is decreed that hers is the extremely important task of applying the fruits of the Redemption to our souls. God’s plan of salvation, magnificent in its simplicity, is unfathomable in all its depth. The apostles gathered around her and She began to be their mother, teaching them, protecting and watching over them. We all have been given a mission, a vocation, in life which must be carefully accomplished. No one can say, *“I’ve done my part”* and then sit back in self-complacency and comfort. On the contrary, one should always be ready to give more. The last things that Christ saw before His Death were His own ruin, His mother’s sorrow, His one surviving disciple and the triumph of His enemies. Consolation is something accidental; faithfulness is essential! Grace is eternal life already begun and the Virgin Mary possessed it in all its fullness: **Mary was “Full of Grace”!** To find her is to find Life: the Life of Grace, the Life that She carried in her womb. The Church teaches that devotion to Our Lady is a sign of assurance of salvation, and She does not say this lightly. St. Bernard said, *“God willed that we should have nothing which does not pass through the hands of Mary.”*



Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical, **FUCUNDI SEMPER**, points out that, *“Every grace that this world receives is ordinarily distributed in three steps: from God to Christ, from Christ to the Virgin, and from the Virgin to us.”* Even when we rebel and let go of her hand and refuse her help, still She does not desert us. We need Our Lady’s maternal love to protect, defend and console us. She loves us and will not abandon us, because we are her children. Let us make haste to Calvary in the company of our sorrowful Mother living her eternal **FIAT** in life and in death. **Have mercy on us, O Mother of God, Our Life, Our Sweetness and Our Hope!**

You are remembered at the Sacred Altar during this holy Season of Lent. We pray for your courage and strength to carry your crosses with love, patience and resignation for the salvation of souls. May you achieve the very highest degree of sanctity and find deep meaning and God’s Peace in your lives!

I impart to all of you, my priestly blessing:

✠ **In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

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