



REFLECTIONS FROM THE BASILICA OF OUR LADY OF WALSINGHAM

9th April 2018



THE SOLEMNITY OF THE ANNUNCIATION

Today, Pope Francis has published a new apostolic exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, on achieving holiness in the modern world. What better way to unite with Our Lady on The Solemnity of the Annunciation, who tirelessly calls us to a life of holiness.

“Holiness, he says, is not based on prayer alone but on also serving those in need and in self-control”.

The Basilica of Our Lady of Walsingham, England's Nazareth is a shrine of the Incarnation in which today's Solemnity is particularly special in marking out the holy and joyful charism of the Annunciation, present to the oldest international shrine to Our Lady in the world. The charism of Joy is a mark of holiness.

This is *the week of the Annunciation* where we honour the visit of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, during which he told her that she would be the mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Since it occurs 9 months before the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day, the Annunciation marks the actual incarnation of Jesus Christ - the moment that Jesus was conceived and that the Son of God became the son of the Virgin.

The Solemnity has been celebrated since the 5th century AD and marks out two items of faith:

- God's action in entering the human world as Jesus in order to save humanity
- Humanity's willing acceptance of God's action in Mary's freely given acceptance of the task of being the Mother of God

The story of the Solemnity of the Annunciation highlights three important liturgical texts.

1. the Ave Maria
2. the Angelus
3. the Magnificat.



CATHOLIC NATIONAL SHRINE OF OUR LADY

THE BASILICA OF OUR LADY, WALSINGHAM

Walsingham - "England's Nazareth"

The Ave Maria

The angel's greeting to Mary, which is traditionally translated as "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee," (in Latin Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum) is the opening of the Ave Maria, and a part of the Rosary prayers.

The Angelus

The Angelus consists of three Ave Marias, together with some additional material. It is said three times a day in the Roman Catholic Church.

The Magnificat

The Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) is the poem with which Mary responds to the Annunciation and celebrates the power of God.

Annunciation History in the British Isles

In ancient times the Solemnity of the Annunciation was the historic start of the new year (Lady Day) in England, Wales, Ireland, and the future United States until the adoption of the Gregorian calendar in 1752. (The year 1751 began on 25 March; the year 1752 began on 1 January.) It is one of the four Quarter days in Ireland and England.

In England, Lady Day was New Year's Day between 1155 and 1752, after which 1 January was declared to be the official start of the year. A vestige of this remains in the United Kingdom's tax year, which starts on 6 April, i.e., Lady Day adjusted for the lost days of the calendar change. Until this change Lady Day had been used as the start of the legal year. This should be distinguished from the liturgical and historical year. It appears that in England and Wales, from at least the late 14th century, New Year's Day was celebrated on 1 January as part of Yule. Before 1751 the year began in March.

The Holy Rosary as a path to Holiness

Uniting with the Archangel Gabriel and St Elizabeth whose declarations of faith form the Hail Mary, full of grace.....and which Our Lady gave to St Dominic in the form of the holy rosary, we are invited to walk the path to Jesus through Mary using this Gospel compendium, which takes us ever deeper into the mysteries of faith to enter into the deeper call to holiness.

Why pray the Rosary today? To grow in holiness and in one's prayer life.

"Among all the devotions approved by the Church none has been so favored by so many miracles as the devotion of the Most Holy Rosary" (Pope Pius IX).

"Say the Rosary every day to obtain peace for the world" (Our Lady of Fátima).

"There is no surer means of calling down God's blessings upon the family . . . than the daily recitation of the Rosary" (Pope Pius XII).

"We do not hesitate to affirm again publicly that we put great confidence in the Holy Rosary for the healing of evils of our times" (Pope Pius XII).

"No one can live continually in sin and continue to say the Rosary: either they will give up sin or they will give up the Rosary" (Bishop Hugh Doyle).



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"The Rosary is a magnificent and universal prayer for the needs of the Church, the nations and the entire world" (Pope John XXIII).

"The Rosary is the compendium of the entire Gospel" (Pope Paul VI quoting Pope Pius XII).

"Meditation on the mysteries of the Rosary . . . can be an excellent preparation for the celebration of those same mysteries in the liturgical actions [i.e. the Mass] and can also become a continuing echo thereof" (Pope Paul VI).

"My impression is that the Rosary is of the greatest value not only according to the words of Our Lady at Fátima, but according to the effects of the Rosary one sees throughout history. My impression is that Our Lady wanted to give ordinary people, who might not know how to pray, this simple method of getting closer to God" (Sister Lucia, one of the seers of Fátima).

"How beautiful is the family that recites the Rosary every evening" (Pope John Paul II).

Pope John Paul II has called the Rosary his "favorite prayer," after the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours.

St. Louis de Montfort warns us against both the ignorant and scholars who regard the Rosary as something of little importance... "the Rosary is a priceless treasure inspired by God."

Today in highlighting the prayer of the Holy Rosary as one of the aspects of the exhortation, Pope Francis's fifth major document, after *Lumen Fidei*, *Laudato Si'*, *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Amoris Laetitia* is a practical call to holiness in everyday life.

At the Basilica of Our Lady of Walsingham we know praying the holy rosary everyday is life changing.