



To all members of the Living Rosary

From: The Priest Administrator

March 2019

The month of March includes two feasts in the Church's calendar which are celebrated with particular joy here in Walsingham: 19<sup>th</sup> March, the Solemnity of S. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Patron and Protector of the Church; and 25<sup>th</sup> March, the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord.

As head of the Holy Family of Nazareth, S. Joseph was given the unique and blessed responsibility of protecting and caring for Jesus and Mary. In the Gospel we hear that "*Joseph did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took Mary as his wife*" (Matthew 1:24). His own remarkable response to God's call and his attentiveness to the will of God, like that of Mary, his wife, gives to every Christian an example to follow and in S. Joseph the Church has a powerful protector. In the words of Pope S. John Paul II, "*Just as Saint Joseph took loving care of Mary and gladly dedicated himself to Jesus Christ's upbringing, he likewise watches over and protects Christ's Mystical Body, the Church, of which the Virgin Mary is the exemplar and model*".

At the Annunciation, the salutation which is at the heart of the Rosary, is heard for the first time from the mouth of the Archangel: *Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.*

Our daily recitation of these words in the Rosary means that we speak both an earthly and heavenly language. Sent by God, the angel Gabriel brings words from heaven to earth, and using them in our prayer and devotion we really are speaking with what S. Paul would call "*the tongue of the angels*" (I Cor. 13:1).

The Annunciation is the moment when, through the Incarnation, earth was united to heaven. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Every offering of the Rosary Prayer, all the Mysteries it contains and upon which we are invited to meditate, find their source and meaning in this truth.

Mary's response to Gabriel's angelic salutation was one she made on behalf of every believer and indeed of the whole of humanity. Mary's "yes" was her Amen to God's own "yes" to humanity as a whole, and in the Rosary we recognize the extraordinary and beautiful way in which she embraced what God asked of her and found joy and the greatest depths of love in doing so.

This season, the Shrine is asking pilgrims to reflect on the words of Mary to the stewards at the wedding at Cana: "Do whatever he tells you".

They are wise and challenging words for all who come to Walsingham, and for all who pray the Rosary. They are the words of a Mother who guides and cares for her children, and who knows in her own heart that *"it is better to trust in the Lord than to trust in man"*.(Ps.118:8)

Celebrating S. Joseph and the Annunciation so close to the beginning of a new season, brings into focus the witness of Walsingham to the place of Mary in the story of our redemption and the response that every pilgrim is called to make to God's word, to conversion of life and deeper trust in God's promises, inspired and encouraged by the example of Our Lady and S. Joseph.

As members of the Living Rosary you are committed to supporting this work of conversion and encouragement and by your prayer and recitation of the Rosary to help ensure that the Shrine's ministry and witness is built on spiritual foundations.

Thank you for sharing in this significant work of prayer and through the Living Rosary undertaking to *"pray for Priests Associate of the Holy House, together with all thanksgivings laid before Our Lady in the Holy House of England's Nazareth at Shrine Prayers"* (from the Constitution of the Living Rosary).

May Our Lady of Walsingham, S. Joseph, S. Gabriel and all the Saints pray for you and protect you, and remember that you continue to be prayed for daily at Shrine Prayers here in England's Nazareth.

Your friend and fellow pilgrim,

Fr Kevin Smith