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In reminding our readers of the Church's dedication of the month of May to our Blessed Lady, we beg to recall the spiritual advantages accruing to the practice of her favorite devotion—the recitation of the Rosary. In this beautiful form of vocal prayer, uttered in union with the members of the living Church throughout Christendom, mutual charity is strengthened, confidence awakened, and loving service extended to the living and the deceased. A special word on the origin of the devotion known as “The Living Rosary,” its approval by the Holy See, its continued practice during the past eighty years, will not be out of place :

The devotion of the Living Rosary is an organization quite distinct from that of the Rosary Confraternity. The members of each may join the other, but they are independent societies or sodalities. Probably the Association was called the Living Rosary because it was founded at Lyons, in the year 1826, by a pious woman, named Marie Pauline Jaricot, with the object of preventing the devotion of the Rosary from dying out of the minds and hearts of the people of France. As a consequence of the French Revolution, many of the pious practices and devotions of the Church had lapsed, or, at least, were in danger of lapsing, and amongst them the Rosary, once a favorite devotion with the French people. Piety had become lax: devotion had grown cold. Many had not zeal sufficient to move them to say the five, much less the fifteen decades at a time. Hence, Marie Jaricot suggested to fifteen personal friends that they should combine; that each should say one decade a day, each saying a different mystery; and that they should thus, amongst them, recite the fifteen mysteries daily. This they undertook to do for a month. At the end of the month they renewed their promise, and thus they perpetuated the daily recital of the Rosary throughout the year.

Many imitated the pious example, and, forming themselves into circles of many times each day, and thirty times as many times each month throughout the cycle of the year. The devotion spread rapidly throughout France. From France it made its way into other lands, and found a home in the hearts and lives of many peoples. It soon became known in Italy, in Spain and the Spanish dependencies, and later in England, Ireland, and the new world.

Local directors were everywhere appointed. They, when named, selected men and women at good-will to work under them. These helpers were called, in Latin, zelatores, or, as we may anglicize the word, promoters. Each promoter was responsible for a group—some for several groups, or “circles,” as they are called—of fifteen men, women, or children. Every member of a circle thus formed, undertook to say, each day of the month, privately, and wherever he chose, the special decade assigned to him, the fifteen decades being distributed amongst the fifteen members of each circle,” or group, by their respective presidents or promoters. (i)

The Catholic Church is ever ready to second and encourage her children in all good works, and especially in their efforts to promote the holy practice of united prayer. Pope Gregory XVI, the then reigning Pontiff, by Apostolic Letters dated January 22, 1832, approved of the Association, and placed it under the care of a Cardinal Protector.

General Directors of the Association in France were also named. But in the course of time, through the death of these and successive directors, the administration of the Living Rosary was somewhat relaxed, and the members became remiss. In order, therefore, to strengthen the organization, and to provide for the stability of the succession of its representative governing power Pope Pius IX, by the Brief “Quod jure herredifario” of August 17, 1877, placed it under the care of the Dominican Order, and appointed as its Supreme Director or Head, Master General of the Order for the time being, entrusting to the then actual Master General the work of drawing up, by apostolic authority, certain rules for its better organization and further development.

It has, however, been decided by the Holy See that, although the Master General of the Dominicans is also the Supreme Moderator or Head of the Rosary Confraternity, as also of the Perpetual Rosary, nevertheless, the Living

Rosary may not be united to any other society or sodality, i.e. to a sodality of the Sacred Heart, or to the Holy Name Confraternity, or even to the Apostleship of Prayer. It must remain a separate association. Although associates of the Living Rosary may be members of other confraternities or societies, such as the Rosary Confraternity or the Apostleship of Prayer, they cannot gain the indulgences of each without a separate and distinct performance of the good works, or by separate repetition of the prayers prescribed as a condition by each society. One recital of the Rosary decade, for instance, would not suffice for the gaining of the indulgences of both the Rosary Confraternity and the living Rosary. It must be said separately and independently for one and for the other.

It may be well to recall another decision of the Holy See. The Living Rosary is not a confraternity, but only a pious association. Consequently, it is not affected by laws made for confraternities. It has, and needs, no special center, no particular church or chapel or altar, no public practices of devotion, no formal meetings of the associates, no register even, beyond the lists of members of the circles, which, as a matter of convenience, are kept by the promoters and directors. It is a simple, pious, private, although organized, association or union, in which the members unostentatiously, although effectively, meditate upon the mysteries of the Incarnation, the Redemption, and the future rewards, privately pray to God through His holy Mother, and thus give honor to Mary and glory and lowly, loving worship to her Divine Son.

The administration of the Association, was, by a Brief of Pope Pius IX (August 17, 1877), committed to the supreme authority of the Master General of the Dominican Order, as representing the Sovereign Pontiff. The Master General may, and, in fact does, delegate his power to the Provincials of the Order, they acting as his vicars or agents in each nation or province. The Provincials, in their part, appoint the local directors, who are generally—though not necessarily—priests. The local directors name the promoters. The promoters, in time, form the circles of fifteen members, administer the circles when formed, and distribute the monthly ticket to each of the fifteen to constitute the circle, subject of course to the instructions of the director.

*(i) For gaining the Indulgences It is only necessary to say a decade of the Rosary. A decade consists of one Our Father and ten Hail Marys and the Creed at the beginning of the Rosary, and even the Glory be to the Father at the end or which decade are not of obligation, nor are the prayers sometimes said at the end of the mysteries. These may, of course be said out of devotion, and it is well to say them, but they are not essential.*