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Family Rosary

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**SERVANT OF GOD
PATRICK PEYTON, CSC: RENEWAL
OF MARIAN DEVOTION IN LIGHT OF
VATICAN II AND *MARIALIS CULTUS***

Laetitia Rhatigan, STD

Peyton: A Brief Biography

Patrick Peyton was born on January 9, 1909; he was the sixth of nine children of John and Mary Peyton. The family was poor, making a meager living on their small farm in Carracastle, County Mayo, Ireland. The family like many families in Ireland prayed the rosary every evening. In 1928, Patrick and his older brother Thomas came to the United States to find work and send money back home to help support the family. They came to Scranton, Pennsylvania; there, Tom found work in the coal mines and Pat became the sexton at the Cathedral. After meeting Holy Cross priests at a parish retreat, Patrick and his brother Thomas were invited to join the Congregation of Holy Cross. In 1929, they entered the Holy Cross Seminary at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana.

Two years before he was scheduled to be ordained Peyton was stricken with tuberculosis. He was sent to the infirmary at Notre Dame with little hope of recovery. For

almost a full year he languished in his hospital bed while his situation became increasingly worse. He was encouraged by a Holy Cross priest to call upon the faith of his Irish ancestors and trust in the power of prayer and Mary's intercession. The Congregation began a novena of prayers for his recovery. Within the week he announced that he was better. The doctors confirmed his cure and he was allowed to return to his studies. Through an intervention by Rome, he was ordained with his brother and classmates on June 15, 1941.

He wrote of his resolution to spend his life until death to bring the Family Rosary to homes in America:

I made a resolution that amounts to this, to spend myself until death to bring the Family Rosary back to 10,000,000 homes in America, and not to one less than that, and to bring the Family Rosary back to home life not for the month of May or October or Lent, but for always, and to bring it about that families will not consider God as their debtor because they wish to kneel down nightly together for the Rosary of Our Lady.¹

He had a single-minded devotion to Mary who was central to his life and ministry. "He wrote that it is not a cause or theory which drives me, it's a person. I feel an awareness of Mary, a driving sense of her humanity, her personality, and all she has lavished upon me."

¹ Patrick Peyton, CSC, to Christopher O'Toole, CSC, July 29, 1946, Family Rosary Papers #1, Archives Holy Cross Family Ministries (henceforth AHC FM).

In 1942, he began the Family Rosary Crusade in Albany, New York. In time he expanded his mission to radio, television and film. In 1947, he founded the Family Theater in Hollywood, California. In 1948, the first diocesan Rosary Crusade was offered in London, Ontario, Canada. The Rosary Crusades were organized to evangelize and promote family prayer. From 1947-1991, Family Rosary Crusades and Rosary Rallies were offered throughout the world. In Manila and Brazil, the crowds were estimated at over one million.² Throughout his long and active ministry he was praised by the Supreme Pontiffs, from Pius XII to John Paul II. He was known for his slogans: “The Family that Prays Together Stays Together” and “A World at Prayer is a World at Peace.”

He died under the care of the Little Sisters of the Poor in San Pedro, California, on June 3, 1992. At the urging of the Congregation of Holy Cross his Cause for Canonization was opened on June 1, 2001. Fr. Peyton is now called “Servant of God.” His work continues today as Holy Cross Family Ministries in the United States and in sixteen countries throughout the world.

Peyton and Vatican Council II

Peyton perceived that the Vatican Council would have a profound effect on the Church in general and on his Crusade and overall ministry. Rumblings from Rome had reached him as he was involved in the crusade in Brazil, July 1962.

² Family Rosary Crusades, AHC FM, North Easton, Massachusetts.

He made frequent visits to Rome in 1962 and 1965, and made sure that he was there for the final session of the Council between October and December 1965. His purpose was to lobby the bishops for their approval of his ministry of Family prayer.³ He did not want to leave to chance an opportunity of the Vatican Council strengthening family prayer and Family Rosary in its deliberations and decrees. He was well aware of the Marian devotion of Pope John XXIII, and believed that the Council was to begin in his spirit. He wrote of his optimism regarding the Council:

I know quite a number of people who were afraid that this might spell the end of the Family Rosary Crusade. They thought or perhaps feared that the spirit of renewal and updating breathed into the Church by Pope John and formalized in the Council decrees was going to bring to the surface new attitudes which would make the Rosary cease to be significant for many and possibly most Catholics. I never had such qualms. I knew Pope John. His love for Our Lady and his devotion to the Rosary contributed an essential element to his spiritual growth and stature. His letter to me of May 1959, which I quoted earlier, was followed by another dated, May 6, 1961. "At the beginning of this month, dedicated in a special way to the honor of the Blessed Virgin," he wrote, "it is especially pleasing to us to renew our sentiments of affection, which continue encouraging you in the already prolonged labor which your zealous priestly ministry has undertaken in spreading devotion to Mary ... We are convinced that authentic devotion to Mary, among whose practices the Rosary takes precedence, besides contributing to intensify the religious life of the faithful, can and ought to make them (as your characteristic

³ Richard Gribble, *American Apostle of the Family Rosary* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2005), 248.

method of preaching teaches, and your experience proves) efficacious instruments of collaboration in the different organizations of the apostolate.”⁴

Although he had confidence in the outcome of the Council with regard to Marian devotion, especially the rosary, he did not lose time in lobbying the bishops in this regard. He frequently met with the Council Fathers seeking their thoughts on family prayer and their guidance on the future of the Family Rosary Crusades. He also lobbied for writing a section on family prayer in the Council documents.⁵

He wrote letters to many of the Fathers of the Council. To His Eminence Amleto Cardinal Cicognani he wrote:

I am now coming to your Eminence to lay before your heart and mind and love for consideration, a proposal to win the Council when and if it focuses its attention on Family Life Today, to recommend family prayer as one of the greatest means for the solution of the problems of the families of today. In this proposal I have no intention of having any reference made to the Family Rosary Crusade, but only to that ancient, tried and proved formula of our ancestors through the centuries by which they maintained family love ... family unity ... family prayer.

To His Eminence Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens, he wrote:

⁴ Patrick Peyton, *All for Her* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 244.

⁵ Patrick Peyton, CSC, “Mary, Family Prayer, and Vatican II,” unpublished manuscript, Family Theater Papers, 09-17, AHCFM.

Finally, I wish to say how encouraged I was, as I was ready to leave for the airport, on hearing and experiencing your reaction to the possibility of the Council giving recognition to Family Prayer as one of the solutions to the problem of family life today ...

On my way to Dublin from Bruges that afternoon, I put down a few thoughts that I am taking the liberty to enclose, with the hope that they may be helpful to your Eminence if and when an opportunity would arise to focus the attention of the Council on Family Prayer for Family Unity.⁶

In each of these letters, he enclosed some information for the Cardinals to support his requests of them. On the same day that Peyton wrote to the Cardinals, he wrote to the procurator general of the Congregation of Holy Cross, Fr. Edward Heston, CSC, who was living at that time in the Congregation's Generalate in Rome. He wrote:

... Above all the favors that I have ever asked of you before for Our Queen and for the Family Rosary Crusade, the one I am now begging you to do is for me the greatest. In short, I am becoming more and more convinced, both from within myself, and from the reactions I am receiving from outside from men of such caliber as Cardinal Suenens; Bishop Smedt [sic] of Bruges, who won such an applause in the Council after his speeches (*Time Magazine* reported the reaction to one of his speeches as the greatest ovation that any Bishop got that spoke at the Council), he is a Family Rosary champion; Mons. Benelli from the Nunciature in Rio, who is very close to the Cardinal in charge of the Commission for Bishops, that when and if the Council focuses its attention on Family Life, it

⁶ Patrick Peyton, CSC, "Letter to His Eminence Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens," January 21, 1963, 08-04-10, 02, AHC FM.

would be worthy for the Council to recommend, amongst other saving factors of Family Life, Family Prayer. ...

After leaving Rome I was with Bishop Smedt [sic] in Bruges. He was so tremendously interested in this possibility that he made a note of it for reference when he comes to Rome in the future. He told me that the key to getting this put before the Council Fathers was Cardinal Cicognani. ...

Cardinal Suenens gave me the feeling that he would keep alert to any opportunity that would arise in the Council in its second session to move this.

Were you dear Father Ed to win the sympathy of Cardinal Cicognani to putting this on the Agenda, as I gathered from Cardinal Suenens that he would be the one who could put this on the Agenda, then it could be possible to condition and inform and alert in the best and most prudent way, the some 320 Bishops from all the continents of the world who executed the Family Rosary Crusade plan.

As time is running out, I am rushing this to you and will be anxious to get your reactions. I will beg Our Blessed Queen to help you with Her wisdom ... with Her influence ... with Her almighty power of prayer, to win Cardinal Cicognani to respond with enthusiasm and then to do everything within his power to see it through.⁷

Peyton's reliance on old friends at the Council included bishops that he had met during the Crusades. With the help of Bishop Mark McGrath, CSC, Peyton drafted a statement that he hoped to be included in "*Schema 13*," of the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World. He also asked Cardinal Suenens to encourage the bishops to include a statement on prayer in "*Schema 13*." Suenens supported

⁷ Patrick Peyton, CSC, "Letter to Rev. Ed. Heston, CSC," January 21, 1963, 08-04-10, AHCFM.

the proposition on the Council floor.⁸ It read, “In order to strengthen the sense of God in the intimacy of the family, that prayer by which all its members in faith and love worship God and receive His most fruitful blessings is especially advantageous.”⁹

In his writings he especially cited the efforts of Cardinal Suenens who was the first speaker, who on September 29, 1965, in the course of the debate on marriage and family, presented the argument for the inclusion of a statement on family prayer. The statement was accepted by the Fathers when the time to vote arrived.

Peyton wrote concerning this inclusion in the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. That reference occurs in the first chapter of the second part, a chapter that discusses ways of fostering the nobility of marriage and the family. Husbands and wives who fulfill their conjugal and family obligations, it points out, are penetrated with the spirit of Christ to perfect their own personalities and promote their mutual sanctification. “As a result, with their parents leading the way by example and family prayer, children and indeed everyone gathered around the family hearth will find a readier path to human maturity, salvation and holiness.”

The idea is further spelled out in the third chapter of the decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, where the decree

⁸ Gribble, *American Apostle of the Family Rosary*, 249.

⁹ Vatican II Intervention, Leo Josef Suenens, September 29, 1965, PPC, Attymass, County Mayo, Ireland.

discusses the various fields of the apostolate. “Christian husbands and wives,” it says, “are cooperators in grace and witnesses of faith” for each other, their children, and all others in their household. “They are the first to communicate the faith to their children and to educate them” “by word and example” “for the Christian and apostolic life.”

His efforts to have the family and family prayer included in the Council documents proved successful. He was pleased with the inclusion of the importance of the “domestic church” in the documents.¹⁰ He wrote in this regard, “Discussions and exchanges with various bishops and theologians quickly confirmed my initial conviction, namely, that the Council was not a danger to be guarded against but a blessed opportunity to be grasped and utilized.”¹¹

He was also pleased with the statements from the Council regarding Mary. He wrote that after a considerable amount of debate during the second session of the Council, it was clear that the role of Mary in the Church was not de-

¹⁰ Austin Flannery, OP, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1975), *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 48: “Inspired by the example and family prayer of their parents, children, and in fact everyone living under the family roof, will more easily set upon the path of truly more human training, of salvation, and of holiness.” *Ibid.*, *The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*: “The mission of being the primary vital cell of society has been given to the family of God. This mission will be accomplished if the family, by the mutual affection of its members and by family prayer, presents itself as a domestic sanctuary of the Church.”

¹¹ Peyton, *All for Her*, 245.

emphasized but simply clarified. He wrote of his pleasure regarding Chapter II (The People of God) of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, and for Chapter VIII (The Function of the Blessed Virgin in the Plan of Salvation), promulgated on November 21, 1964.¹² One reference Peyton quoted from this Chapter IV, was about the “cult” of Mary he wrote; “... the Council Fathers urged that the cult, especially the liturgical cult, of the Blessed Virgin be generously fostered, and the practices and exercises of piety recommended by the magisterium of the Church towards her in the course of centuries be made a great moment.”¹³ Reflecting on this he wrote:

I was not surprised but I was delighted by these statements and by the entire framework of theological evaluation of Mary’s unique place in the Church in which they were presented. It seemed to me that Pope Paul’s decision, announced in the same speech in which he promulgated this decree, to proclaim Our Lady as Mother of the Church was a logical outflow from the Council’s own action. It clarified that Mary is the Mother of the family of God, the Mother of the members of Christ, the Mother of the Mystical Body. Her honored and indispensable role in the Family of God is thus the same as that of the mother in any family who pours herself out in selfless love for her children.¹⁴

¹² Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II*, “The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” *Lumen Gentium*, 21, November 1964.

¹³ LG, Chap. IV, no. 67.

¹⁴ Peyton, *All for Her*, 246.

The results of the Council, with regard to support for the role of Mary in the Church were clearly hailed, appreciated and accepted by Peyton. The Council sessions were rich for him in other ways, especially providing him an opportunity not only to meet with individual bishops but also with entire national hierarchies to discuss with them their expectations for the Crusade.¹⁵

Restructuring of the Family Rosary Crusade

Peyton was aware that the Council's updating of the Church meant that he would have to make changes in the methods of the Crusade. He developed a concrete plan of action to address what changes needed to be made in the current Crusade methodology. He asked a sociologist from Latin America, Fr. Renato Poblete, SJ, to study the Crusade and suggest ways that it could contribute more effectively to the cause of religion in Latin America.¹⁶ Fr. Poblete interviewed a select group of bishops in whose dioceses the Crusade had been held. The bishops interviewed were from the Philippines, India, South Africa, Australia, Canada, the United States, Panama, Brazil, Venezuela and Chile. He also held meetings with theologians and sociologists who played a part in the shaping of the Council, men such as Fr. John Courtney Murray, Fr. Jean Daniélou, Fr. Yves Congar, Fr.

¹⁵ Peyton, *All for Her*, 249.

¹⁶ Gribble, *American Apostle of the Family Rosary*, 250–251.

Bernard Häring, Fr. Emile Pin, Fr. François Houtart, and Fr. Isaac Wust.¹⁷

Two meetings associated with the Poblete study were held at the Holy Cross Generalate in Rome on November 11, 1965. The first meeting was hosted by Cardinal Suenens; Fr. Peyton and twenty seven others participated in this morning meeting. The participants included bishops, theologians, and five religious women. The group focused on the place of popular religiosity in the post-conciliar Church. Family Rosary Crusade was one example discussed.¹⁸ The discussion at this morning meeting led to a further evening meeting attended by Fathers Peyton, Poblete, McGrath, Pelton, and Arthur McCormack. It was decided that a second meeting on the topic of the Crusade would be held at the University of Notre Dame in March “for careful examination of the Poblete Report” and to continue the discussion of the role of the Family Rosary Crusade in the post-conciliar world.¹⁹ The bishops who criticized some aspects of the Family Rosary Crusade seemed to be more aware of general pastoral problems that the Church was facing today. Although they recognized unanimously all the good points that we have mentioned above, they advanced criticisms which reflected the spirit of the Council.

¹⁷ Peyton, *All for Her*, 254.

¹⁸ Minutes of Meeting at Belgian College, November 11, 1965, Reorganization Papers, 05-03, AHCFM.

¹⁹ Summary of Meeting on the Crusade, November 11, 1965, Reorganization Papers, 05-03, AHCFM.

- They all agreed that there was a great need for follow-up of the Family Rosary Crusade. This follow up must be a more permanent action of the Church and therefore was also very important.
- Talks and sermons should not be only a presentation of devotions to the people; there should also be a greater emphasis on the whole meaning of Christian life with all its spiritual and social implications. The rosary should not be presented as a magical thing with many promises of success. Probably it would be better to present family prayer instead of just praying the rosary.
- Especially in underdeveloped areas, the Crusade should insist more on social doctrine of the Church so as to make people aware of the social differences that exist and the great needs in which their fellow men found themselves. Insistence should be placed not only on the family but also on the relations of the family to the community, to strengthen the formation of community organization.
- Devotion to Our Lady should be linked more to the Church and to Christ and should not stop in Our Lady but should lead to Christ. Therefore there should be more emphasis on the catechetical aspects, especially when the Crusade took place among people whose religious knowledge was very poor.
- The Crusade seemed to be linked too much to the person of Fr. Peyton and depended on his charism.

- Although the Crusade was to be completely apolitical, the director should be aware that it might be used in some places for this purpose. Therefore, before starting the Crusade there should be much planning with the Conference of Bishops of any nation.²⁰

Fr. Peyton was gracious in his response to the study and suggestions of changes to be made.

Further planning of the reorganization of the Family Rosary Crusade took place in March 1966. The meeting at the Center for Continuing Education of the University of Notre Dame was inaugurated with a series of meetings on the theological implications of the Vatican Council. The following are some of Peyton's thoughts regarding this meeting to reorganize the Family Rosary Crusade.

I think that the report by Father Poblete and the discussions at Notre Dame have already accomplished one very substantial benefit, and that is to clarify that such differences of opinion as may exist about the utility of the Rosary and the value of the Crusade are a reflection of a much wider divergence regarding the pastoral function of the Church. This is the same divergence which came to light at the Council, at times producing heated clashes. The Council urged liturgical and Biblical renewal, and some enthusiasts wanted this renewal to be applied immediately and in its totality at all levels in the Christian community. It soon became apparent, however, that two exaggerations are possible. A pastoral approach only for the masses, based exclusively on the traditional cultural aspects of the

²⁰ Renato Poblete, SJ, "Report of Study of Family Rosary Crusade," November 1965, 05-03-00-07, AHCFM.

Christian message, can cease to be meaningful for members of highly educated and sophisticated groups, who feel the need for a more personal approach to religious expression. But a pastoral approach tailored to the needs of elite, of the so-called “small community” of the well-educated and actively engaged members of the Church, can be equally lacking in meaning for the masses.²¹

In continuing this reflection, Peyton claims that the Church needs both of these elements in order to be a Church and not merely a sect. He wrote that the Council recognized these two parts of the society of the Church were drifting dangerously apart. And he wrote that one way the Council attempted to bring them closer to each other and gave them strength was through the chapter on Our Lady in *Lumen Gentium*, the Constitution on the Nature of the Church. With regard to this text, Peyton wrote that it was:

... a chapter which emphasizes that Our Lady is not peripheral or accidental to the life of the Church, not the object of a devotion which challenges the centrality of God and of Christ, but an integral part of the Church’s essential life.

The emphasis on the liturgy similarly forced our most progressive theologians to examine again the place of devotion to the Mother of God in our prayer life, and specifically the place of the Rosary as an expression of devotion to Mary. The result has not been to downgrade devotion to Mary but to insist on bringing it back more closely to the liturgical center and to purge it of extraneous

²¹ Peyton, *All for Her*, 257–258.

growths which might leave it open to misunderstanding or deviation.²²

In defense of the rosary, he pointed out that the rosary recited now is not the same rosary that St. Dominic recited in the thirteenth century. It has evolved since that time, and he believed that there is no reason to assume that the particular form of the rosary popular at the present time is necessarily definitive.²³ From his experience praying the rosary during the time of the Council with Cardinal Suenens and other guests at the residence of the Cardinal, he told of these times after dinner when they would all join in the recitation of the five decades of the rosary, followed by the song *Salve Regina*. He wrote of the inspiration he received through this experience.

Participating in this family gathering inspired me to new enthusiasm, to new conviction that not only has the Rosary survived the Council, but that it has been projected by it to a new pinnacle of importance in the Church.

Like Cardinal Suenens, I find absolutely no need to change the traditional structure of the Rosary for my own personal devotion. It remains full of endless inspiration for me in the form in which I learned to lisp it at my mother's knee.²⁴

²² Peyton, *All for Her*, 259.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Peyton, *All for Her*, 260.

The Campaign for Family Prayer, 1968

Convinced that the rosary had a place in the new directions of the Church, Peyton enthusiastically began the work of updating the program. The reorganization began in 1967. From January to June of that year, Peyton sent six Holy Cross priests to a pastoral institute in Madrid sponsored by the University of Salamanca. One of the priests sent, Joseph Quinn, CSC, explained Peyton's reason for their presence at the pastoral institute:

The purpose of sending the men to Madrid would be that Father Peyton believes this institute would help the Family Rosary Crusade to update itself in line with the thinking of the Second Vatican Council. He also feels sure that the Pastoral Institute will enrich the Crusade for tomorrow.²⁵

With the input from the Poblete Report, the Notre Dame Conference, and the pastoral institute, the actual work of renewal was underway. Revised versions of the manuals used in the previous crusades were prepared. Importantly, the entire program would be carried out from start to finish by the local people.²⁶

The first diocese in which the new venture was implemented was the Archdiocese of Milwaukee in 1968. The basic format of the crusade remained unchanged;

²⁵ Joseph Quinn to Jerome Lawyer, Memorandum, January 6. 1967, 267.74 (FT) 2, Archives Holy Cross Generalate (henceforth AHCG).

²⁶ Peyton, *All for Her*, 265–266.

however there were some changes made for the Milwaukee Crusade. A new name, “Campaign for Family Prayer,” was the most obvious change. Attention was moved from the word “rosary” to “family.” Archbishop William Cousins wrote of this change.

We repeat this is a Campaign of Family *Prayer*, leaving the Rosary to the countless thousands who find in it the traditional values, the comforts and consolations of earlier days, and opening up at the same time the whole broad vista of family prayer in *all* of its forms, not omitting family participation in the great sacrificial prayer of the Mass.²⁷

The Campaign for Family Prayer was held from April 14 to May 26, 1968. In preparation for this event an Instructor’s Handbook, entitled “Campaign for Family Prayer” (hereafter CFFP), was collaboratively written by the Family Rosary team and the team from the archdiocese. The foreword to the handbook read: “Inspired by its ideals, Father Peyton moved quickly to vitalize the Campaign for Family Prayer with sharp biblical, liturgical and ecumenical overtones.”²⁸

The focus of the new campaign was family prayer, explaining that the form of family prayer differs according

²⁷ William Cousins to “Fathers/Monsignors,” February 19, 1968, Milwaukee Crusades, 01-26, AHCFM.

²⁸ Instructor’s Handbook, *Campaign for Family Prayer* (Central Office of the Campaign for Family Prayer, Milwaukee, WI, n.d. [1967]), 01-28-05, AHCFM.

to the circumstances of each family. The rosary was still highlighted as one of the most common forms of family prayer, but drawing from the new recommendations, the use of the Bible and the liturgy was encouraged as one sure way to achieve peace and understanding and a way to face family problems with authentic Christian spirit.

The role of the laity was encouraged and supported in the Campaign with the intent of bringing Christ and His message into the lives of families and their neighbors, thus creating Christian communities. In this respect the Campaign favored the celebration of the “home Eucharist,” encouraging small family groups to gather in homes to celebrate the Eucharist, the ideal family prayer. Given the ecumenical emphasis in Vatican II, the Campaign presented a stronger than before ecumenical dimension.²⁹

This ecumenical priority in the Milwaukee Campaign was supported by both Archbishop Cousins and Fr. Peyton. Fr. Peyton told Fr. Joseph Quinn, CSC, on the staff to the Campaign, that he wanted “a practical, efficacious, operational program that could sell to the Anglican Bishop, to the Methodist leader [minister] and to the Jewish rabbi.”³⁰ He fully supported the ecumenical approach, but he objected to any reduction of Marian devotion. He voiced his message in this regard:

²⁹ Instructors Handbook, *Campaign for Family Prayer*, 3–4.

³⁰ Patrick Peyton, CSC, to Joseph Quinn, CSC, March 3, 1967, Crusades, Milwaukee, 01-26, AHCFM.

Far from de-emphasizing Our dear Mary, I strike out for Her with all the enthusiasm that ever I had. If there was ever a truce [sic] charisma, this is mine: To get the world aware of Mary's essential relationship with Christ, our God incarnate, in saving Mankind. When you destroy Mary, you destroy the Incarnation mystery and when you destroy the Incarnation mystery, Christ is gone.³¹

The Milwaukee campaign received a great deal of criticism. The most serious came from those who were not pleased with the new look of the Crusade. Critics believed that the campaign's name change and the replacement of the rosary prayers with general prayers effectively de-Marianized the event. Some objected to the ecumenical aspects of the campaign.³² Archbishop Cousins responded to the criticism by stating that he believed "the Crusade gave prominence to the Rosary and re-established a devotion that was being unfairly ridiculed by those of the modern school."³³

After the Milwaukee campaign, the post-conciliar Crusade for Family Prayer returned to Latin America in October 1969. In a pastoral letter from the Guatemalan bishops the post-conciliar posture of the crusade was endorsed:

³¹ Patrick Peyton, CSC, Speech, April 3, 1968, Correspondence, Rioux, 05-01, AHC FM.

³² Lawrence S. Brey to Patrick Peyton, CSC, April 14, 1968, Crusades Milwaukee, 01-26, AHC FM.

³³ William Cousins to Gary MacEoin, October 1, 1969, Correspondence, Gurley, 05-01, AHC FM.

The Crusade for Family Prayer, which we begin today, is an effort of the entire Church in Guatemala—bishops, clergy and the faithful. The Church directs this effort toward all of the families of the country without exception. We make a united call to every family, Catholic or non-Catholic, inviting them to pray for a holier family and a happier world. And in this way, every true Christian should become an authentic promoter of justice and peace.³⁴

As in Milwaukee, the Crusade was marked by some modifications. Parish homilies emphasized generic family prayer rather than the rosary specifically. In these crusades the rally was generally not the last event, rather it was scheduled in the middle of the Crusade, generally this was followed by two or three weeks of homilies, and pledge week was now referred to as a family week.³⁵ The successful crusade rally held on December 7, 1969, in Guatemala City, marked a return of the Crusade to prominence after the less successful efforts in Milwaukee.³⁶

The crusade then moved to Costa Rica; the rally was held there in the capital city of San Jose on August 2, 1970, with fifty thousand in attendance.³⁷ The Crusade gained momentum as it moved to El Salvador and Honduras. In

³⁴ Pastoral Letter of Guatemalan Bishops, November 9, 1969, Crusades Guatemala, 01-16, AHCFM.

³⁵ Schema of the Organization of the Crusade, n.d. [1970], Crusades Mexico, 01-21, AHCFM.

³⁶ Cardinal Mario Casariego, Speech, December 7, 1969, Crusades, Guatemala, 01-16, AHCFM.

³⁷ Calendar of Events, n.d. [1970], Crusades, Costa Rica, 01-10, AHCFM.

September 1970, a central office was established in San Salvador, with Luis Armijos, OP; John Gurley, CSC; and the local auxiliary bishop, Oscar Romero, as local directors. The crusade in El Salvador was conducted between January 7 and March 10, 1971.³⁸ The crusade moved to Honduras between May 3 and July 11, 1971.

Mexico was host to the Crusade for Family Prayer longer than any previous nation. Crusades were conducted there intermittently between the spring of 1970 and the end of 1974.

Peyton also brought the Crusade to the Holy Land in the 1970s. Over four hundred people, including eight Holy Cross priests, took part in an international rosary pilgrimage,³⁹ with rallies held in May 1971, in Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem.⁴⁰ The following is an excerpt from his talk at Nazareth on May 24, 1971.

For this have I come amongst you. For this have I invited you to come from far and near. For this have I come here to greet you, meet you—and pray with you. And through the Family Rosary Crusade, blessing is an awareness, a consciousness of Mary’s reality; thanks be to God, Mary is real for me; she is alive; She is somebody’s daughter; She knows what it is to be on this earth of ours; She knows

³⁸ Calendar of Events, n. d. [1971], Crusades, El Salvador, 01-12, AHCFM.

³⁹ Holy Land Pilgrimage Brochures, 1971 to 1974, Family Rosary Papers, 507.35, AHCFM.

⁴⁰ John Gurley to Hanna Nazzal, February 3, 1971, Crusades Holy Land, 01-17, AHCFM.

what sorrow is, what fear is, what poverty is, what deprivation and destitution are.

Family Theater in the 1970s

With the decade of the 1970s, there came new possibilities and hope for Family Theater. With the rise of film and television, the radio programs, which were popular and brought prominence to Family Theater, ended in 1968.⁴¹ Peyton realized that, with the rosary films used in the Popular Mission, one could not expect people to come back again and again to the same films. He also knew that it would be advisable to have a variety of films dealing with the sacraments, with the commandments, and with moral virtues and with home and family life—all being helpful for the spiritual growth of each individual and the family as a whole. He believed that such a collection of films would bring the message of the Family Rosary Crusade all over the world.⁴² In this regard, he wrote of the need to reorganize and revive the ministry of Family Theater in the Hollywood office. He wrote of his plan for this project: “It is for this purpose that, in the midst of all my other activities, I have clung to my toehold in the film capital of the world.”⁴³ Peyton was unique in his pursuit of all the modern means of

⁴¹ Gribble, *American Apostle of the Family Rosary*, 266.

⁴² Peyton, *All for Her*, 267.

⁴³ Peyton, *All for Her*, 268.

communication available at his time from which to accomplish his mission of evangelization.⁴⁴

From his presence at the Council, Peyton gained new motivation to be creative in the communication industry. He cited the Council's influence on his ministry, quoting from the Decree on Instruments of Social Communications.⁴⁵

On the contrary the Council inspired me to new effort. "Let effective backing be given to decent radio and television productions," it urged in the Decree on the Instruments of Social Communications, "particularly those which are proper family fare. Catholic features should be intelligently encouraged, that through them audiences may be led to participate in the Church's life, and truths of religion may be instilled. ... It should be a matter of concern that their offerings excel in professional quality and forcefulness."⁴⁶

Television productions were expensive and people told Peyton that he would never be able to meet the costs involved. He realized the effort to get the financial backing

⁴⁴ It is interesting to note that even prior to Peyton's enthusiasm for the mass media (above all in film productions), as a twentieth-century evangelization tool, Pope Pius XI had expressed the same conviction in his 1936 Encyclical *Vigilanti Cura*. The same attitude followed with Pius XII, conveyed in his 1957 Encyclical *Miranda Prorsus*. For more extensive development on this point, see Michael P. Duricy's STL thesis, "Mary in Film: An Analysis of Cinematic Presentations of the Virgin Mary from 1897–1999: A Theological Appraisal of a Socio-Cultural Reality" (International Marian Research Institute, 2000).

⁴⁵ Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II*, "Decree on the Means of Social Communication," December 4, 1963, no. 14.

⁴⁶ Peyton, *All for Her*, 277.

for radio programs, and the prospect of getting fifty thousand dollars for a half-hour television show left him without an answer. Yet his inspiration from the Council moved him to continue in this quest for the creation of good programs for evangelization. He quoted again from the Council's Decree on Communication:

The Council did that for me in the same Decree on Communication. "It would be dishonorable indeed," the Fathers solemnly warned, "if sons of the Church sluggishly allowed the word of salvation to be silenced or impeded by the technical difficulties or the admittedly enormous expenses which are characteristic of these instruments. Hence the sacred Synod admonishes these sons that they are duty bound to uphold and assist ... radio and television stations and programs whose main purpose is to spread and defend the truth and to strengthen the Christian texture of human society. This Council likewise urgently invites associations and individuals with great economic or technical prestige to give willingly and generously of these resources and talents to the truly cultural and apostolic potential of these instruments."⁴⁷

The significant new product that Family Theater developed in the 1970s was the *A Matter of Faith* series. This program was "designed to recapture and refocus the spotlight on eternal values that once held it [the world] exclusively, and in so doing to reassure many that they are

⁴⁷ Peyton, *All for Her*, 278.

indeed on the right track if they believe in God, prayer and the corollaries to these.”⁴⁸

The Rosary in Eclipse, 1970–80

Despite the continued success of the Crusade for Family Prayer, with its accomplishments in Latin America and the significant attempts to restructure the format of the overall program, the Crusade for Family Prayer had minimal growth in the 1970s.⁴⁹ Church documents written after the Council were discouraging to Peyton as they acknowledged that Marian devotion was on the wane, but they were encouraging in the attention and depth that they continued to show regarding Mary.⁵⁰ He realized that, with the rise of emphasis on social action in the Church, personal devotions such as the rosary would surely be on the wane. Given this, he was also confident that the rosary would become popular once again.⁵¹ He wrote, “It is exactly that, an eclipse. The Rosary is like the moon. When the eclipse is over it will be all the brighter.”⁵² Although he made every effort to include other forms of family prayer in the Crusade it seems that he

⁴⁸ Vincent J. Ryan, “Fr. Peyton, Abp. Sheen on TV, Mother’s Day,” *Twin Circle*, 7, no. 19 (May 18, 1973).

⁴⁹ Gribble, *American Apostle of the Family Rosary*, 263.

⁵⁰ “Behold Your Mother: Woman of Faith.” A Pastoral Letter issued by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, November 21, 1973.

⁵¹ Gribble, *American Apostle of the Family Rosary*, 265.

⁵² *The Evangelist* (Albany Diocesan Newspaper), September 14, 1972, Families for Prayer, 07-1, AHCFM.

found the rosary to be the most efficacious prayer for families. In a statement in support of the rosary as the favorite prayer of the family, he wrote:

I have always said that the Rosary is the prayer FRC must strive to have families pray. For me the Rosary makes the difference. We cannot say our work is done when we have won a family to pray spontaneous prayers, grace before and after meals, shared prayer, [or] readings from Scripture. We must never stop having and setting our sights upon educating, motivating and inspiring a family to reach the heights—to make the traditional Rosary their family and favorite prayer ... It goes without saying then that we must advocate Family Prayer—but cannot stop there. We must do all in our power to lead the family to pray the Rosary.⁵³

Another evidence of the confidence he had, that the rosary devotion would return to the appreciation that it enjoyed in previous years, came in the form of a letter that he wrote in 1966, responding to a priest who asked him if he would continue to emphasize the rosary, in light of Vatican II. He responded:

I ask Our Queen to use this effort of mine now to help Her assure you that I have no intention whatever of de-emphasizing the Rosary. It is the Rosary's excellence and its power as a formula of communication with God which are my very life. I feel I could never have had the successes the Crusade had enjoyed were it not for this deep burning desire within my soul. Wherever God permits me the privilege to preach to peoples in the different areas of the earth the

⁵³ Patrick Peyton, CSC, "Statement," n.d. [1980] Families for Prayer, 07-02, AHCFM.

essence of my every talk is the excellence of the Rosary. I cannot foresee the day coming when I could change this formula.⁵⁴

Marialis Cultus

The years following the Council saw a great proliferation of scriptural, liturgical and theological writing regarding Mary. With regard to the post-Vatican writings there was concern that by so spiritualizing the risen Christ his humanity would be underplayed. This was also true with regard to writings on Mary. Realizing this “crisis,” in 1973, the American Catholic Bishops wrote a pastoral letter, “Behold Your Mother: Woman of Faith.” This letter highlighted Mary’s place in the Scriptures, in doctrine, and in the life of the believer; it also indicated that the traditional practices had changed rapidly. When asked about the decline in Marian devotion, Fr. Karl Rahner answered that the danger is to turn the central truths of the faith into abstractions, “and abstractions have no need of mothers.”⁵⁵

This situation, of placing a high superiority on liturgy over popular Marian devotion, prompted requests that the rosary be accepted as a liturgical prayer. Fr. Peyton, CSC, wrote an impassioned letter to Pope Paul VI, requesting, that the Family Rosary be declared a liturgical prayer. “My heart

⁵⁴ Patrick Peyton, CSC, Letter to Reverend Msgr. Rudolph G. Banas, St. Paul, Minnesota, July 6, 1966, 08-04, AHCFM.

⁵⁵ Graef, Hilda and Thomas A. Thompson, SM, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion* (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 2009), 416, citing text (85), NCCB, “Behold Your Mother.”

cries out for a papal document which could take the form of an encyclical,” he wrote. “May I beseech Your Holiness to enhance, enrich and raise to a higher-level of efficacy the Family Rosary by proclaiming it a liturgical prayer.” This and similar requests persuaded Paul VI to address the Church on the subject of the rosary, and the Congregation for Divine Worship was asked to “prepare a draft of the papal document” that would encourage the “recitation of the rosary by families.”⁵⁶

Following upon this request, the Congregation recommended that the rosary be considered in the context of Marian devotion and that Marian devotion be related to the liturgical reform. Ignacio Calabuig, OSM (of the Pontifical Theological Faculty Marianum in Rome), was requested to draft a document which would eventually be the papal letter on the rosary. The Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI was issued on February 2, 1974. In this letter, all Marian devotion was viewed within the context of the one Christian worship.⁵⁷

Pope Paul VI’s 1974 apostolic exhortation was entitled, *Marialis Cultus* (Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary).⁵⁸ In this exhortation he supported the efficacious method of family prayer. He wrote, “But there is no doubt that, after the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, the high point which

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 417

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Pope Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*.

family prayer can reach, the Rosary, should be considered as one of the best and most efficacious prayers in common that the Christian family is invited to recite.” In 1975, in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*,⁵⁹ he wrote, regarding Peyton’s policy with regard to the power of the mass media as an agent of evangelization: “Mass media put at the service of the Gospel is capable of increasing almost indefinitely the power in which the word of God is heard. The Church will feel guilty before the Lord if she does not utilize these powerful means.” These documents gave Peyton great hope for the future of the prayer of the rosary and the ministries of Family Rosary and Family Theater. It seems that Peyton had an influence on Pope Paul VI’s writing of *Marialis Cultus*.

Peyton was elated with the publication of *Marialis Cultus* since he believed it clarified any current thoughts regarding the eclipse of Mary. He wrote the following observations regarding *Marialis Cultus*:

Were you to ask me how Simeon felt when he took into his arms the Child from His Mother, I think I could answer from how I have felt since reading and meditating on the Marian and Rosarian document promulgated recently by our Holy Father. Through this document St. Paul writes again of the Church, St. Bernard speaks again and counsels us to look to Mary, call upon Mary, listen to Mary and hold fast to Mary, and the Popes’ appeals of the past 400 years have come to us again to take the rosary into our hearts and homes and through it grow in grace, wisdom and strength to enable us to cope with life today and those overwhelming challenges.

⁵⁹ Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Apostolic Exhortation, 1975), no. 45.

It is as teachers and preachers—for Bishops, priests and religious—for ecumenists, liturgists and theologians—for the distressed, the confused and the lost—for the young and the old and for all.

The eclipse that enveloped Mary and the rosary in recent times has proved to be another “felix culpa” that produced so clarifying and so motivating a document. Through this document we learn that Mary is not a luxury, she is a necessity.

Mary is now in perfect focus: Mary is for now—Mary is for all—Mary is our Mother—our Sister—the first Christian—the first of Christian teachers—the first of Christian parents—the first of the believers—the first of the followers—the first of the Communion of Saints—the Associate and Mother of the Redeemer.

Mary is now invited to come back to her family. When a mother is absent for one reason or another from her home and family, disorder is rampant, but when she returns it does not take her long to bring order and peace to the home.

The rosary is now revealed in a brilliant light for what it is; a precious jewel, a compendium of the gospel, a gospel prayer, a prologue and epilogue of the Eucharistic sacrifice—the Mass, and **ONE OF THE GREATEST AND MOST EFFECTIVE PRAYERS FOR THE FAMILY.**

Like flood gates open, this document’s doctrine and grace now envelop the earth. No home, no village, no hamlet, town or city or state shall be deprived of its riches. Our Holy Father invites and exhorts the Bishops of the world to be the leaders, the advocates and carriers of its messages. In their hands, Pope Paul has placed this rosarian and Marian document to serve for the rest of time as a handbook for pastors, manual for teachers, guideline for theologians, liturgists and ecumenists and a bright star in the night for the fearful and confused.

It is an authoritative answer to all who ask: where is Mary, what has happened to the rosary?

With sureness and certainty, individuals and families will once again take the rosary into their hearts and homes and through it grow in faith, holiness, peace and happiness. Once again the homes of men—the chapels of the religious—the monasteries of the monks and rectories of the priests will resound with the prayer of the Holy

Rosary. The wheel has made its full turn. The tide is coming in but deep, the eclipse of Mary, the brilliance of her rosary will shine all the clearer and brighter.

After thirty-two years of effort throughout the world, the apostolate of the Family Rosary Crusade, through this document, has received its crown and this gave it the assurance and determination to continue for many, many years to come as a powerful voice in strengthening family life through the recitation of the daily family rosary.⁶⁰

In September 1974, Peyton sent a letter and a brochure copy of the Apostolic Letter, *Marialis Cultus*, to the Bishops of the Third World. In his letter to the Bishops, he encouraged them to implement Pope Paul VI's appeal. Following the opening paragraph of this letter, he wrote:

... May you find in it, too, a practical way of applying the findings and decrees of the Synod of bishops on Evangelization. May it provide you most of all with a program that, at one and the same time, responds to your overall wish and will for the pastoral, catechetical, inspirational, devotional and prayer life of your people.

Finally, may I suggest your selecting a priest or lay-leader to carry out your wishes regarding this proposal? It would be well for such a priest or layman to have a sense of the power of this electronic age through its cameras, cassettes and microphones—through

⁶⁰ Patrick Peyton, Father Peyton's observations on the Marian Document of Pope Paul VI, AHCFM, 08-02-03-12-00.

television, radio and cinema—through projectors and generators—to create so many pulpits for Christ and His Gospel.⁶¹

The works and documents of the Vatican Council II and the post-conciliar era, especially with Pope Paul VI's 1974 writing of the Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus*, had a great impact on Fr. Peyton's life and ministry. The Council's "Decree on the Means of Social Communication"⁶² motivated him toward creating new media (films). The results of the Council and the subsequent directives encouraging a renewal of Marian understanding confirmed Fr. Peyton's commitment to supporting the well-being of the family through prayer, especially the prayer of the rosary.

Author Biography

At the time this paper was presented, Laetitia Rhatigan was the Director of Family Rosary in Albany, New York. She retired from that position in November 2015. When she earned her Doctorate of Sacred Theology with specialization in Marian studies (2010), her dissertation was on the writings and works of the Servant of God, Fr. Patrick J. Peyton, CSC.

⁶¹ Patrick Peyton, *Marialis Cultus* letter to Third World Bishops, September 23, 1974, AHC FM, 08-02-03-12-00.

⁶² Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II*, "Decree on the Means of Social Communication, Vatican Council II," December 4, 1963.

