

PAULINE JARICOT AND THE LIVING ROSARY

The spiritual genius of the Venerable Pauline Marie Jaricot goes far beyond the foundation of the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith. In fact, she knew that prayer is the foundation of the Church's Mission and was determined to make the Rosary known and prayed by as many people as possible to sustain the proclamation of the Gospel in the missionary territories.

In 1826, encouraged by her success in organizing the Missionary Societies in small groups, Pauline initiated the Living Rosary based on the same criteria. Initially, she organized her friends and collaborators into groups of 15 people determined by the number of mysteries of the Rosary at that time. She asked each member to make a commitment to pray a decade of the Rosary daily and to meditate on the mystery of the day for an entire month. In this way, each day the groups recited and meditated on all 15 mysteries of the Rosary. At the start of the month, the group leader personally redistributed the Mysteries amongst the members. For each of the following four weeks each member prayed a decade of the rosary meditating on the given Mystery. Therefore, each month Christ's entire life was the object of prayerful meditation by the group and, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the prayer was presented to God. In this way, the Rosary became a 'living' reality that supported the Church's Mission to proclaim the Good News to those who had not yet heard it. In this way, the prayer of the Living Rosary began to sustain the apostolic endeavor of missionaries sharing the Gospel throughout the whole world.

Pauline's dream was that the Living Rosary would spread quickly to become a worldwide phenomenon. Already in 1831, she wrote that, "the groups of 15 continue to multiply with incredible speed in Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, England and parts of America. The Rosary has spread its roots as far as the Indies and especially in Canada." Pauline's hope was that the Rosary would unite people all over the world in fervent prayer for the mission of the Church. In fact, at the time of Pauline's death in 1862, the Living Rosary was comprised of more than 150,000 groups of 15 people with 2,250,000 members in France alone. Today, the Living Rosary continues to be practiced in many parts of the world. With the new set of Luminous Mysteries approved by St. John Paul II, the groups now consist of 20 persons. Thus, this important prayer initiative supporting the Church's task of evangelization continues to this very day, thanks to the inspired initiative of Blessed Pauline Jaricot, Foundress of the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith.