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**The Pope's Golden Rose  
History of an ancient symbol of the good odor of Christ**

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Benedict XVI, visiting some famous Marian shrines, has donated a golden rose as a sign of piety and devotion. This is an ancient gesture, reserved to the Pope and never fell into disuse: Paul VI bestowed the Golden Rose to the shrine of Fatima in 1965 and that of the Virgin of Guadalupe in 1966, while John Paul II sent to the Black Madonna of Jasna Gora in 1982.

The emphasis in the course of centuries, the Papal gift has overshadowed the original meaning of the gesture, which is part of the Roman liturgy stational. Like other papal rites and traditions, including the golden rose, we can distinguish two periods: before and after the return of the Avignon Popes in Rome.

In the first period, the Golden Rose was blessed during the statio Sunday of Lent, which was held in Santa Croce in Gerusalemme. During the liturgy of Laetare Sunday, the Pope carried in his left hand, after having blessed the golden rose, which he laid on the altar of the basilica, then Sessoriana. At the end of Mass, the Pope and took her again to return to the Lateran Patriarchate, giving it, finally, to the prefect of Rome, who had participated in the ceremony on behalf of the city.

The OrdoXI describes in detail the celebration. The Pope went in solemn cavalcade, the Lateran Palace to the Basilica of Santa Croce, where he sang the Mass, preaching, holding the golden rose blessed and, having reflected on the liturgy of the day, showed it to the people, instructing him on his mystical meaning. After Mass at the Lateran on ride back with the rose in her hand. The portico of the basilica, dressed in purple with gold-colored stockings, the prefect of Rome - who had accompanied him on foot, acting as a groom - helped him to dismount supporting bracket. Removed from the mount, the Pope gave the rose, which he received on his knees, kissing the feet shortly after the pontiff.

On his return from Avignon began to bless the golden rose in the Lateran Palace. From the middle of the fifteenth century is destined for this purpose room of the vestments. The ceremonial Patrizi Piccolomini and Burchard, published then by Christopher Marcellus, describes the ritual sequence, remained, with slight variation, unchanged until the last century. The text recalls that it is customary for the Pope on the fourth Sunday of Lent, Laetare Hierusalem in which singing, blessing the golden rose. Then intended to be given by the Pope himself, immediately after the celebration of Mass, a prince, if present in the liturgy, or to be sent to any person or institution having consulted the cardinals "in his room or in a circle to where he most like it. "

At the beginning of the rite the golden rose was placed on a small altar, the vestments specially prepared room, with two lighted candles. The Pope, after wearing the alb, the stole, the robe and miter, approached the altar where he had placed the rose. It placed the miter, the ritual began with the verse adiutorium nostrum in nomine Domini, the liturgical greeting and prayer of blessing. After which, a cleric of the room, in surplice and rochet, holding the rose before the Pontiff, who anointed with the balsam and introducing a small amount of

ointment, mixed with chopped moss, largest in the bud, where it had been obtained a small tank. Balsamo and moss were presented by the papal sacristan.

Soon after, incense infused portogli the first Cardinal of the priests, the Pope sprinkled holy water rose and incense. The cleric of the room and then handed to the cardinal deacon who in turn gave to the Pope, who went to attend the chapel with the rose in her left hand and right hand in blessing. Faldistorio come to the altar, before kneeling for a short time of worship, the Pope handed back to the cardinal deacon, the rose, which was delivered to the room clerk, who placed it on the altar, in the middle of a veil pinkish embroidered in gold.

At the end of Mass, repeated the prayer to faldistorio before the altar, the Pope took up the rose and returned the same way in the Hall of Vestments, or in his apartment, where he was admitted to the prince or the character to which the rose was intended for. These kneeling at the feet of the Pontiff received the gift with these words: *Accipite Rosamar de Manibus nostris here Licet immer locum in Terris Of tenemus for quam designatur gaudium utriusque Hierusalem, triumphantis scilicet militantis et Ecclesiae, for omnibus quam ipse Christi fidelibus manifestatur flos speciosissimus , east of here gaudium, et omnium sanctorum coronam Suscipe hanc you dilectissime wires, here secundum saeculum nobilis, BC potens praeditus eg fine virtue, virtue in Christ ut amplius omni Domino nobiliteris tamquam pink super Plantata rivos aquarum multarum, his former gratiam quam tibi fertile dementia dignetur grant, eg here trinus et unus throughout all eternity. Amen. In nomine Patris et Spiritus Sancti et filii ("Get out of our hands, as unmerited vicar of Christ on earth, the rose, with which it is made manifest the joy of the two Jerusalem, the Church Triumphant as the militant, and for which to all the faithful of Christ is meant himself, the flower most brilliant, that is the joy and the crown of all saints, accept it, Thou, beloved son, who on earth six noble, powerful and rich in power, so that, abundant as the rose planted along waterways, so all your virtues are ennobled in Christ the Lord. To you, from His infinite mercy, deign to grant such grace, the One who is Three in one for ever and ever. Amen. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit ")*.

If the recipient is not present, was the rose is sent by means of a special legation, which were also the bearers of the golden rose, members of the Roman nobility, whose charge was to be up to the reform of the chapel and pontifical family made by Paul VI. The delivery of the rose was accompanied by an apostolic letter that explained the meaning and special education masters of ceremony on the apostolic rites to be observed. The blessing of the rose was only ever given the fact pope, when he was out of Rome - as happened during the visit of Pope Pius VI to Vienna in 1782 - the rose was not blessed, but was exposed in the papal chapel that blessed ' previous year. If during the year had not been given, once again blessed the same rose. If, however, prevented the Pope, due to illness or advanced age, the rose was blessed in the private chapel. Sometimes, because of the calendar that was on the fourth Sunday of Lent coincides with the solemnity of the Annunciation, the rose was blessed in the sacristy of the basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, where he held the papal chapel.

Originally the Golden Rose indicated primarily happiness and joy for the upcoming Easter and had a profound Christological significance, since - as he recited the prayer of blessing - it represented the lily of the valleys, the flower of the field: that is, Christ. One Lord asked that the Church, through good works, could be associated with the fragrance of that flower and spread the good odor of Christ in the world. So, to those who received a gift, was recognized with the task of bringing the good odor of Christ, the life and work in the service of the Church. Even the gift of a church or a shrine led back to the same meaning: to bring Christ to the world.

Regarding the origin of the ritual we know that Leo IX (1049-1054) asked the monasteries he founded in Alsace to reach out every year in Rome already cast a golden rose, or the quantity of gold sufficient to finish it. The rose was scheduled to arrive in town in time for the statio of Lent Laetare Sunday. So, during the

pontificate of Leo IX, the ceremony of the Golden Rose was given already in use. A scholar of the eighteenth century, Francis Annivitti, reproduced the text of a manuscript preserved in the monastery of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, containing the sermon of Honorius III on the occasion of Laetare Sunday of 1217, which attributed to Pope St. Gregory the introduction of the rite. Who was this Blessed is difficult to say.

In Benedict XIV - which also operates in the field of liturgy has not been investigated and not written enough - we have a lot of useful information on the subject. Fourth vertentis In his letter of 24 March 1751, we find a small treatise on the golden rose, which he sent to the metropolitan area of Bologna, its ancient episcopal see. Pope Lambertini, in fact, made to study in depth the meaning and origin of the rose, also promoting some academies, held in his presence. Many writers agree that in narrating the Alsatian Leo IX, would be submitted immediately to the Roman See, exempt from the jurisdiction of the local bishop, the monastery of Santa Croce in the diocese of Tulle. And remember that freedom, forced the Pope to send every year, eight days before the fourth Sunday of Lent, a rose or two ounces of gold Roman of the same metal. The payment of this amount of gold will be promptly recorded in Liber censuum Cencio Chamberlain.

Bishop Lonigo, master of ceremonies under Paul V, rather than tells Leo IX would also collect the golden rose to the abbess of the monastery of Bamberg, in memory of the exemption from the jurisdiction of the ordinary. The Besozzi, another scholar who had written on the subject, noted that if Leo IX forced the nuns of Bamberg to send the Golden Rose, the tradition of blessing the rose already existed for some time. Benedict XIV married this statement, did not consider Leo IX author of the rite, as the golden rose was Portari usual on the fourth Sunday of Lent: words to show that the ritual had been previously introduced and that it was only Pope from Alsace bore spending to his monastery.

We therefore agree with Benedict XIV that it is a very ancient rite, already in use at the time of Leo IX. Gaetano Moroni seems to welcome the idea that "this festival vuolsi donation by the Popes to the surrogate keys of gold and silver, which filings with the chains of St. Peter's used to bless and send a gift to the great characters."

The shape of the rose changed with time. It was originally composed of a single flower, tinged red in bud. The red was replaced by a ruby and other precious stones. Subsequently, the rose took the form of a thorny branch with more leaves, flowers and topped with a pink largest pure gold. In the middle of the main was inserted a small bowl with a lid or a thin foil with holes, in which the Pope poured the balm and the moss chopped rite introduced to mimic the gentle fragrance of the rose and also to emphasize the profound meaning of the Christological was given. Finally, since the sixteenth century, they began to enter the branch of roses in a vase and replace the gold with silver-gilt. The introduction of the pot will hold it inconvenient to the Pope in his left hand, and the cleric for this room who presented to the Pope the rose will have the task to take on the way from the hall to the chapel vestments, the Pope ahead.

Running down the long list of more than 180 recipients of the Golden Rose, we can also read a unique history of the papacy, which intersects with events large and small, as well as notes of color. The first rose delivered outside Rome fell to Fulcone of Angers, who had given hospitality to Pope Urban II (1088-1099). The roses were given to the doges of Venice, however, considered not as a gift to the person, but in the Republic. What Benedict XI sent in 1304 to the Dominican convent of Perugia was soon sold to cover the needs of the poor. Henry VIII of England, he received two: the first by Julius II, the other by Pope Leo X. Those donated by Martin V in the Vatican basilica and Pope Clement VII to the brotherhood of the Banner will be part of the spoils of mercenaries in the sack of Rome in 1527.

In 1462 Pope Pius II gave it to Thomas Palaeologus, brother of Constantine XI, last emperor of Constantinople, May 29, 1453 had been killed on the city walls, now fallen into Turkish hands. It was the last tribute to the Pope's humanist culture of Byzantium. Showed a certain eccentricity Sixtus IV, who wanted to send to his city

of Savona is not a golden rose, but a branch of oak, alluding to his name and his coat of arms. Alexander, however, granted to Caesar Borgia.

Some golden roses marked the restoration or beautification of the great Roman basilicas, such as the one given by Paul V in the Vatican basilica for the translation of the holy popes named Leo in 1608. Many were then sent to the cathedral where the Popes had previously been bishops: Innocent XII in Naples, Pope Urban VIII in Spoleto, Benedict XIV in Bologna, just to name a few. Among the Marian shrine of Loreto that he received the greatest number. Pius IX sent to Mary Adelaide of Savoy, wife of Vittorio Emanuele II, and Leo XIII gave it to Mary Caldwell, the only civilian to have obtained it, through the merits acquired in the foundation of the Catholic University in Washington. The last sovereign to receive will be the Italian Queen Elena, wife of Vittorio Emanuele III of Savoy, in 1937, by Pius XI.

Finally, it is significant to note that, since the middle of the seventeenth century, the golden rose will become more and more a gift for the Marian shrines, the queens or female personalities, better for other people regardless of chivalry, especially the sword and cap, which is blessed at Christmas: a sign, too, the changing perception of the symbolic value of the rite.

in Pompeii, October 19, 2008.