

# JULY 16, 2023: 15<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME



Last week I presented yet another way of praying through scripture because there are many different ways to use the Bible when praying. This week I would like to examine how we can pray the rosary in different ways. I have to admit that I did not pray the rosary consistently throughout my life until coming to Saint Francis in Dracut and living with Fr. Jim Lyons. Fr. Jim was very committed to praying the rosary as a daily action in his life. After his death I really reflected on the role that the rosary played in his priesthood. This reflection led me to begin praying the rosary on a daily basis, and I found that doing so has deepened my prayer life.

I believe many people do not pray the rosary because they find that praying the Our Father and Hail Mary repeatedly is somewhat monotonous. I have to admit that this was the case also for me during my earlier years. Our problem is that we focus too much on the words of the prayers and not on their real purpose. The prayers are not intended to be the focus; instead, it is important that we focus on the mystery being prayed. Praying the Our Father and Hail Mary repeatedly provides a buffer to distractions. The prayers are meant to lead us into contemplation and to silence the noise that so often accompanies our attempt to pray. As we pray, we should *not* focus on the words of the prayers but, rather, on the meaning of the mystery.

I meditate on the mysteries in various ways, and I have found that in doing so, the rosary has become a more powerful instrument in hearing God in my life. As one way of entering into the mysteries, I look at some virtue I am trying to grow in and see how it is expressed in the mysteries I am praying. As an example, I may try to see how Christ exhibited patience as I pray through the sorrowful mysteries. Or, I may try to see how purity is revealed through the joyful mysteries. I recently did that and I came to a whole new appreciation for exactly what purity is and where it leads us in our relationship with God. I began by examining Mary's purity in the Annunciation and saw that it was not just a physical reality—i.e., not engaging in sexual behavior outside of its proper place. Instead, Mary's entire being was given to God for his work of salvation. We are told in the beatitudes that 'Blessed are the pure in spirit for they will see God.' Purity allows us to see the world as it really is—dependent upon God—which is why Mary responded "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word." As I continued to pray the remaining joyful mysteries, I gained a deeper understanding of the virtue and how I can grow in it, and that I am called to grow in it.

Another way I use the rosary is with scripture. I will use a phrase from the scriptures that is related to the particular mystery, such as in the second Luminous Mystery—the Wedding at Cana—when Mary says "Do whatever He tells you." I will sit and contemplate on what it means to truly open to Christ in the way that Mary is indicating: the level of trust that it truly entails and also the hope that can come from having that trust. Or, in the fourth Luminous Mystery—the Transfiguration—when Peter says "It is good that we are here." I will contemplate how good it is to spend time in prayer with the Lord and how it opens me to Him throughout the day.

Also, at times I simply sit with the mystery and spend a moment or two contemplating the love Christ has shown us through that mystery. I am not doing anything too deep; I just think about what the resurrection means to my life, or what it must have been like to experience the agony in the garden, and what Christ did for me to save me. In this way my prayer entails a simple openness to how I may have experienced this truth in my own relationship with Christ.

The power of the rosary is thus *not* found in the repetition of prayers but, rather, in allowing the words of the prayers to drown out the noise in our lives. It is not about being exact. If you happen to miss a Hail Mary or an Our Father, you have not invalidated the rosary. Our focus should be on mystery and the mystery of our life, and that is whole purpose of the repetition of prayers.

Next week I will lay out the praying of the rosary itself.

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to ask me directly, or send your questions to me at [fr.brian@theholyrood.org](mailto:fr.brian@theholyrood.org) , or if easier please call or text me at (978) 254-0560.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Fr. Brian".

Fr. Brian