

Meditations: October 7, Our Lady of the Rosary

Some reflections that can enrich our prayer on the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary.

- The rosary leads us to Jesus
- A path for the contemplative life
- For peace and the family

ACCORDING to a tradition dating back to the 13th century, the beginning of the rosary is attributed to Saint Dominic de Guzman, to whom the Virgin Mary appeared to

teach him this devotion. Later, in the 16th century, Pope Saint Pius V established its liturgical memorial on this date, the anniversary of the victory in the battle of Lepanto. Since then, this prayer has been constantly recommended by the Roman Pontiffs as a “public and universal prayer for the ordinary and extraordinary needs of the Holy Church, of nations and of the entire world.”^[1]

Through the mysteries of Christ’s life, seen through Mary’s eyes, our love for God and for others is helped to grow. Just as a child draws close to its mother when it needs help, so we too can place at our Lady’s feet our desires to live close to her Son. Saint Josemaría wrote: “Immaculate Virgin, I know well that I am only a miserable wretch, and all I do is increase each day the number of my sins...’ You told me the other day that this was how you spoke to our Mother. And I was confident in

advising you with assurance to say the Holy Rosary. Blessed be that monotony of Hail Marys which purifies the monotony of your sins!”^[2] —

“When the rosary is prayed, the most important and significant moments in the history of salvation are relived; the various stages of Christ’s mission are reflected on.”^[3] — The rosary helps us to live the mysteries of Jesus by entering into them close beside Mary. She is the creature who best knows Christ, since “it was in her womb that Christ was formed, receiving from her a human resemblance which points to an even greater spiritual closeness”^[4] — To draw close to Mary is to draw close to her son Jesus.

SAINT JOSEMARIA invited us to pray the rosary not only with our lips, but also with the desire to accompany Jesus and Mary in each of the scenes. “Have you... ever *contemplated* these mysteries? *Become little*. Come with me and — this is the essence of what I have to confide — we will live the life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Each day we will render them a new service. We will hear their family conversations. We will see the Messiah grow up. We will admire His thirty years of hidden life. We will be present at His Passion and Death. We will be awed by the Glory of His Resurrection. In a word: we will contemplate, carried away with Love (the only real love is Love), each and every event in the life of Christ Jesus.”^[5] —

A contemplative life enables us to experience each event in greater depth, to enjoy it more, to feel greater compassion and understand

it better, as someone who does things together with God. Just seeing a sunset is not the same as contemplating it. We can pass by a work of art and simply glance at it or focus with admiration on the features that help to make it beautiful. Living in this way leads us to not stay simply on the level of what is superficial or external, but to delve into everything that reality offers us, especially other people. And we can contemplate in this way when praying the rosary.

Hence truly praying it is not simply a matter of repeating Hail Marys without much reflection, but of discovering what these prayers hide. In them we can unite ourselves to the life of Jesus and Mary, with the words of the archangel Gabriel. We want their life, little by little, to become part of our own life; in short, we want to “breathe” with them and with God. “First of all to contemplate

is not a way of doing, but *a way of being*. To be contemplative. And being contemplative does not depend on the eyes, but on the heart. Here prayer enters into play as an act of faith and love, as the ‘breath’ of our relationship with God. Prayer purifies the heart and also sharpens our gaze, allowing us to grasp reality from another point of view.”^[6] —

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OFTEN WE aren’t always able to pray and contemplate the rosary as we would like. Added to possible time constraints is the normal struggle to focus our attention. We try to consider the Hail Marys that make up the mysteries, but our thoughts sometimes turn to other pressing concerns. These words of Saint Josemaría can console and encourage us: “You are distracted in prayer. Try to avoid distractions, but

don't worry if in spite of everything your mind still wanders. Don't you see how in ordinary life even the most considerate children play with the things about them, and often pay no attention to what their father is saying? This does not imply a lack of love or respect: it is the weakness and littleness of a child. Look: you are a child before God.”^[7] —

Therefore our struggle when praying the rosary won't focus exclusively on combating distractions. Moreover, we will make use of these distractions to feed our prayer and place these concerns in Mary's hands. This is what the saints have done throughout history. Saint John Paul II said: “The Rosary has accompanied me in moments of joy and in moments of great difficulty. I have entrusted so many concerns there and have always found comfort.”^[8] —

Of all the intentions that we can entrust to our Lady when reciting the rosary, recent popes have singled out two in particular. First of all, peace, since “the Rosary has a peaceful effect on those who pray it, disposing them to receive and experience in their innermost depths, and to spread around them, that true peace.”^[9] And also the family: “*The family that prays together stays together.* The members of a family, in turning their eyes towards Jesus, also regain the ability to look one another in the eye, to communicate, to show solidarity, to forgive one another and to see their covenant of love renewed in the Spirit of God.”^[10] We can entrust these two intentions to Mary, in order to be families that transmit peace wherever they are.

^[1] Saint John XXIII, *Il religioso convegno*, 29 September 1961.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, *Furrow*, no. 475.

[3] Benedict XVI, Speech, 3 May 2008.

[4] Saint John Paul II, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, no. 10.

[5] Saint Josemaría, *Holy Rosary*, Prologue.

[6] Francis, General Audience, 5 May 2021.

[7] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 890.

[8] Saint John Paul II, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, no. 2.

[9] Ibid., no. 40.

[10] Ibid., n.41.