

**September 25, 2022**

Dear Friends in Christ,

Each year the month of October takes us deeper into the autumnal beauty of nature. Each year October opens before us as the month devoted to Our Lady. On October 7 we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. For many Catholics the rosary is their daily Go-To prayer. And yet for many other Catholics they look at the rosary and their eyebrows knit. There is this quandary. “Father, I know that many Catholics love and pray the rosary but to be candid with you, I just don’t get it. It seems so repetitious and then to have to remember all the mysteries—which I never can—and it takes fifteen or twenty minutes. I apologize but I just don’t grasp the importance or significance of this prayer form.”

Ny friends, I learned the rosary at a very early age. We actually prayed the family rosary when we were children, kneeling in the living room after dinner dishes were completed. That family prayer was a mixed blessing because of the diminished attention span of my brother and myself. We often said the rosary at school. Even during the Latin Mass at times when we went to Mass as a school community. In the seminary we were encouraged to pray the rosary daily. I did for many years. Then after ordination when I was able to be the celebrant at Mass, the Eucharist became the high point of my day, and the rosary was there but now in second place.

I prayed the rosary with greater and lesser fidelity and devotion over the years of my priesthood. But then in 2007 I went to Medjugorje and had an experience of the presence of the Blessed Mother in which I prayed with the most intense fervor and openness of my entire life. In that prayer I asked Mary if she would be the mother for me that my own mother (who was still alive and 91 years old at the time) wanted to be but was not able to be.” That prayer came from deep within my heart. Until I prayed it, I did not even know that I had ever thought it. But the Blessed Mother gave her nod of response. I believed. More. I knew. What Jesus had offered when hanging on the cross: “Behold your mother.” Had just come true for me in a country very far from here. In an instant I was different. I have not missed praying the rosary from that day until this.

Inside of each of us is this lingering question: “What am I getting out of this? How will I know of the Lord is speaking to me?” But we actually have it backward. If we approach with the attitude of: “What’s in it for me?” then we misunderstand. Try this. “Lord, I give this time to You. I open my heart to You. I pray these prayers to You. If you desire to bless me with any grace, so be it. If you desire to have me feel nothing at all, so be it. This prayer time, O Lord, is my gift to you. It does not have to have any positive or beneficial impact on me, let alone provide an unmistakable experience of you in me. It is my sheer gift to You.” Try that approach. Give the Lord your gift—imperfect as it is. Give your praying of the rosary—with all its distractions, all its disturbances, all its lack of understanding, all its expectations of any kind to Our Lord. Give as a gift. As little as it is, give the gift. And you will come to learn that slowly the prayer begins to take hold of you. And it feels right. It centers you—in your life, in your day. It holds your attention more than you force your intention. This is her month. But prayer to her draws us into closer union to her son, who is her gift to all of us.

Peace,  
Msgr. McHenry