



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

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Three reasons to pray the Rosary

At a recent parish visit, a parishioner asked me if I would devote a column to promoting the Rosary. My response: Happily! Here it is.

Reflecting on my personal experience, I can think of at least three reasons and therefore three different ways to pray the Rosary:

(1) In a time of grief or crisis, such as at a loved one's deathbed, or while driving during a blizzard, it is hard to remain calm enough to pray with any kind of recollection. But the Rosary prayer enables us to cling – speaking both literally and figuratively – to something of God.

Holding the Rosary, and letting the beads slip through our fingers as we say the prayers can help distract us from anxiety, can be a calming influence. Maybe this would be like hiding behind and clinging to our mother's skirts.

(2) We pray for what we need, and we pray to the One that can deliver. The Rosary is sometimes prayed to ask Mary to pray for us sinners to God, for example: "This Rosary is offered for an increase of vocations to the priesthood for the Archdiocese of Dubuque."

In fact, the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary (October 7) was established in gratitude to Mary for her intercession, resulting in victory at the battle of Lepanto. We are of course mindful of the words of Jesus, warning us against rattling on like the pagans. Unlike garlic, incense, and seminarians, more words are not necessarily better; one word prayed in faith is enough.

(3) The heart of the Rosary is to reflect on the mysteries of the life of Jesus and of Mary. When praying the Rosary this way, we don't think so much about the words of the prayers, as on saying them at a slower pace in a regular rhythm.

The repetition of the words in this way has been shown (even scientifically) to induce calm and to improve concentration. This interior disposition makes it easier for us to ponder the mysteries, in order that we might imitate what the mysteries of the Rosary contain, and obtain what they promise.

For whichever of the above reasons, the most important thing is to pray the Rosary, alone or with others, in church or elsewhere, and to hope that it has its transforming effect on us.

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