

May 5, 2020

My dear Staffordians,

Just before my mom died on April 1, 1990, knowing that she would not live to see my ordinations to the diaconate and priesthood, my vocation Director, Father Gould told her a secret to cheer her up. The secret was where I was going to be sent for my summer assignment. Father Gould still tells this story. His secret seemed to work very well. Mom was happy to know what no one else but Father and she knew.

I arrived at my summer assignment and two weeks later a newly ordained priest arrived to begin the first parish assignment of his priesthood. Father and I hit it off right away. Interestingly, I had just come to what I could almost call a conversion to Saint Thérèse three weeks before and was eagerly reading her autobiography. Father was glad to know this and I was glad to know him. He will probably read this one day and smile, recalling it all as I tell it you now.

One afternoon I confided to Father my disappointment with myself whenever I prayed the Rosary because I prayed it so poorly. With a nod that let me know he understood, Father chuckled a bit and said, "Bob, Thérèse had trouble with the Rosary too. She said it was truly a penance for her." That was music to my ears; I didn't know that. I looked up the place in her autobiography to read for myself exactly what she had written. Spread across pages 242 and 243, Thérèse came clean and said that she enjoyed praying in choir with other sisters...

but when alone (I am ashamed to admit it) the recitation of the rosary is more difficult for me than the wearing of a penance. I feel I have said this so poorly! I force myself in vain to meditate on the mysteries of the rosary; I don't succeed in fixing my mind on them. For a long time I was desolate about this lack of devotion that astonished me, for I love the Blessed Virgin so much that it should be easy for me to recite in her honor prayers which are so pleasing to her. Now I am less desolate; I think that the Queen of heaven, since she is my MOTHER, must see my goodwill and she is satisfied with it.

Having recently fallen for Thérèse my attachment to her grew when I read her admission that she found praying the Rosary difficult too. From that day my relationship with the rosary changed. Thérèse had shown me that perhaps what defined the essence of praying the Rosary after all was not the quality of my meditation but the goodwill of my heart.

To show our Blessed Mother my goodwill I resolved to give the Rosary primacy of place in my day; it was the least I could do. I resolved to pray the Rosary every day; this would demonstrate my fidelity, a component of my goodwill. Finally I resolved to have a good intention, to pray the Rosary as well as I possibly could every day. Now the quality of my rosary meditation, after I kept my personal trinity of resolutions, would depend largely on grace. To help me express my good intention, over time I gradually composed the prayer on the following page to serve as my proximate preparation for praying the Rosary:

Dear Lord,

*I come before You now, inspired by little Thérèse
and by my own love for You and for our Blessed Mother
to bring You special joy and put a smile on Your Face;
that I hope to do by honoring our Holy Mother.*

*Knowing how I loved my mother on this earth
and how I've missed her since she's gone.
I can only imagine how much You must have loved Your Mother in Nazareth,
and how You must love her in eternity.*

*And knowing how often she has asked her children around the world
to pray the Holy Rosary,
especially for world peace and for the conversion of sinners.
And realizing that the world is in a very grave state
and that sinners like me are yet unconverted,
And considering at last that probably relatively few people
take Your Mother's pleas to heart...
Poor as I am, I hope to bring You special joy by being one of them at least
and put a smile on Your Face
by offering up the Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
in honor of Your Mother, in memory of mine,
in your Name, to the glory of God the Father, in the power of the Holy Spirit,
On behalf of my mother, Rose, my father, Joseph, my sister, Linda,
N.N. and N.N.*

The Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary!

I am grateful now for the intervention of Father Riley and Saint Thérèse. With resolutions in place to guide me, and God's grace to uphold me, I have been able to pray the Rosary now for almost three decades without any anxiety. For many of those years I prayed the Rosary on my knees as Saint Louis de Montfort commends. But after some time I began to notice a certain anxiety creeping in again. One day I realized I was spending more of my energy and attention kneeling than I was praying, so I began to sit while I prayed. Not long after that I was diagnosed with osteoarthritis in my knees. Our Mother understands my goodwill. *Let nothing trouble you* she seems to say to me now. How I love Her.

I must close for today. May God grant you a restful night. Now I send you my blessing through the air, as always, with a grateful heart for you.

Faithfully in Jesus and Mary,

Father DeMartino