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Expressions By Don Johnson

The Centrality of Prayer in the Catholic Experience

One of the most wonderful things about becoming a Catholic was that I rediscovered prayer. I have only officially been a Catholic since last Easter, even though I believe I was always one and just didn't know it. There were nearly twenty years during which I hardly entered a church. Before that, I was a protestant. Now, protestants do pray, both corporately in their worship services and personally in their own homes or "in their closet." As a Catholic, I have discovered the joy of prayer that is part of the liturgy that we all share. In short, I have learned to pray the Rosary.

In the "Hail Mary," I have learned to trust Mary to intercede for me out of her wisdom and mercy. Even when I don't know for what I should be praying, I can always trust her to bring the right thing before the Son and the Father. The "Our Father" is praying in the manner that Jesus taught all his disciples to pray. It contains all the elements necessary for an everyday prayer. It acknowledges God the Father and his position of ruler of the universe, and his involvement with us as individuals. We live in His Kingdom. He gives us our daily bread. He is always restoring the relationship he has with us through his forgiveness and grace. What more do we need? I love the "Glory Be." It is a hymn and prayer of praise to the Trinity. I can pray it and not ask for anything. Amid all the insecurity and uncertainty of modern life, we can all ways depend that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are unchanging. Their love and desire to be in our lives remains the cornerstone of life for every Christian. As they have been in the past, they are now, and shall be until the end, no matter how long we have to wait for that come about.

But there is more than just praying the prayers. For praying the Rosary also allows us to meditate on the fundamental mysteries of our faith. As we pray, we think about how Jesus became incarnate through being carried and loved by a human mother (The Joyful Mysteries), how he walked among us and taught us (The Luminous Mysteries), how he sacrificed himself for our forgiveness (The Sorrowful Mysteries), and how he rose in triumph and how Mary became our intercessor (The Glorious Mysteries). When we open our minds in considering all these things, Jesus reveals new insights into ourselves, into Him, his Father, and the Holy Spirit. Thus, even though these are formal prayers we recite over and over again, the Mystery of faith becomes ours to hold, to keep, and to discover.

Finally, I got this wild idea. I decided to learn how to bead. I got some beautiful dark-blue beads and set out to make my wife a Rosary for a gift. I since have made one for my daughter and have orders to make one for my daughter-in-law and son. I haven't even had time to make one for myself, but I've bought the beads. Maybe you're a "cradle Catholic," and have always known these things from your youth. Maybe you have been a Catholic for some time now, and your prayer life isn't what it was because you have kind of "forgot" the power of prayer. I am just discovering it new for the first time. I am excited about it. Join me for the blessing of prayer and make it a central part of your life. You buy the beads, and I'll make you a Rosary.