

# Praying the Rosary

## The Rosary: A Prayer for our times

**Bishop Brendan Kelly**

**F**or Patrick Peyton, 'the Rosary Priest', was born one hundred years ago this year in the small rural parish of Attymass in north Mayo. As a young man of nineteen, he took the emigrant boat along with an older brother to the United States.

After some time there, he was hospitalised with tuberculosis, an often fatal disease in those days. He recovered and was convinced that it was through praying the Rosary that he was healed. Subsequently, he devoted his entire life to the promotion of the family rosary as a way to peace in the family and peace in the world. Through his Rosary Crusades in the fifties, sixties and seventies, of the twentieth century, he brought the message of the family rosary to the very ends of the earth, literally.

*'Mary kept all these things and pondered them'*

To pray the Rosary is nothing other than to do what Mary did. Luke tells us that Mary 'kept all these things and pondered them in her heart' (2:19). The 'things' in question here are all those things she, his mother, experienced in living with Jesus: The announcement of her being chosen by God to be the mother of the Saviour, the birth at Bethlehem, the events of the Presentation and later the 'Finding' in the Temple, and at the wedding in Cana. Finally, there was the deepest pondering of all as she took her stand silently, beside her Son on the cross, at Calvary, with him all through his slow agony and death.

*First Christian and model for us all*

Mary is our mother too. She is mother of the Church. She is first Christian and model for all Christians. The great gift of the rosary as a prayer is that it enables us to do as Mary did right

through her life: we ponder with her the events of the life of Jesus. In the Rosary we call these events 'mysteries' because meditating on them is an endless source of fresh enlightenment for the experiences of our own lives. As we ponder the mysteries with Mary, we are slowly and imperceptibly transformed and we become more and more like Jesus and one with him. More surprising and affirming still for us is the fact that we discover in meditating the mysteries that Jesus is one with us, now in the joy, now in the sorrow and now in the glory that can be our experience at any moment in our lives. When Pope John Paul II identified five new 'Luminous Mysteries' from Jesus' public life, he reminded us that Jesus' entire life and every event of that life illuminates our lives and experience today.

*The fruit: peace, hope.*

The deep fruit of pondering the mysteries of the Rosary for us is not that our problems are resolved, but that in the midst of all the ups and downs, we find light and peace.

When we pray the Rosary, we are never alone. Mary is always praying and pondering with us. We join her in her prayer. It is not just the events of our personal lives that are illuminated, but the times in which we live are illuminated too. All that we live today of insecurity, fear, loss, for example in these recessionary times, are present in the mysteries. As well as strengthening us to confront and endure insecurity and pain, in the mysteries of the Rosary we are drawn to recognise and acknowledge too the joy and all that is good and even heroic in our lives today. The Rosary, recited daily, is a persistent journey of transformation for us, a journey that relentlessly carries us into light, into the glorious mystery that is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. Praying the rosary transforms us into men and

women of hope, no matter what the world does to us.

*A program for our times*

This was the experience of our people in far darker times. Oliver Cromwell, reporting back to the authorities in England in 1651 about his campaign in Ireland, had this to say:

*'All is not well with Ireland yet. You gave us the money, you gave us the guns. But let me tell you that every house in Ireland is a house of prayer, and when I bring these fanatical Irish before the muzzles of my guns, they hold up in their hands a string of beads, and they never surrender.'*

In our own day, religious commitment is often portrayed as synonymous with fanaticism. We have over-confidently trusted in money to solve our problems. The ever-increasing criminal use of guns in our society cries out for confrontation. But what do we do? Cromwell, hostile witness though he was to Irish custom and faith in the 17th Century, ironically now gives us a program for our times: 'Every house in Ireland a house of prayer.' Can this 'string of beads' and all it stands for be today a simple but powerful tool for a new evangelisation and a new Catechesis centred in our twenty-first century homes and hearths?

On 3 May 2008 Pope Benedict, after praying the Rosary in the Basilica of St Mary Major in Rome, spoke tellingly: 'Today', he said, 'The Rosary is experiencing a new springtime' especially amongst young people. Jesus is the answer to the deepest yearnings of our human hearts, young and old. In this year of St Paul it is fitting to remember the passion that drove this greatest of all missionaries: 'I believe that nothing can happen that will outweigh the supreme advantage of knowing Christ

Jesus my Lord ... All I want is to know Christ and the power of his Resurrection' (Phil 3:8, 10). For rich or poor, young or old, there is no

more simple or solid road to knowing Jesus our Saviour than to pray the Rosary, and to do so above all, with our own family, in our own homes.

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*Bishop Brendan Kelly  
Bishop of Achonry*

# The Family Rosary: As Important as Ever!

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**Rev James Phalan**

**A**bout a month ago I received by mail a prayer request from someone in France that I did not know. In one dense paragraph a grandmother spoke of sickness, divorce and family dysfunction, yet still spoke of faith, love and hope. I have been carrying this little piece of paper with me since. It struck me that it is a snapshot of families today. In no way could we say that complexity in family life is new; however, it is experientially evident, especially to those who minister to families, that families today are confronted on many sides by an unparalleled level of stress that threatens the stability of their members, especially children. In a society purported to offer economic insulation that pretends to make God unnecessary, you only need to scratch the surface of most people's lives to quickly see significant pain.

In 1942 Servant of God Father Patrick Peyton CSC, native son of County Mayo whose birth centenary we celebrate this year, inaugurated THE FAMILY ROSARY. It was the height of World War II and young Father Pat was inspired to call families together to pray for peace. In addition he had the insight to see looming on the horizon the crisis of families that is now epidemic. He said later that he had been praying with all his heart to know how he was to dedicate his life in Mary's service and it 'was given to him' ... the Family Rosary.

In our day we too should dedicate ourselves to this same intense questioning prayer: what can we do in the face of so much pain and instability that threatens the fabric of society? Certainly there is much to do, but I want to propose that we not overlook the importance of one simple act that can change the world: FAMILY PRAYER and specifically the ROSARY.

Too simple to be that important? Yet in the simplicity of Father Peyton's insight lies its brilliance. It is one concrete action that a family can do

together – and that Church leaders can promote – which will make a difference in so many ways. It is not a panacea nor a magical solution, yet something which has the potential to impact many levels of personal, family and communal life.

When we encourage family prayer, of course we frequently hear the response that the family today hasn't the time to pray the Rosary. But that reply points at the problem area that we need to challenge. I respond that families today cannot afford NOT to pray and must dedicate significant time to pray regularly. A family that prays together will be one in which children are formed in character and values and receive the faith and unconditional love they will need in order to confront so many contemporary challenges. If parents do not take care to give their children these most important gifts, there are certainly many negative forces in the world that will be more than eager to steer young people in *their* directions.

Praying the Rosary together is about calling the family home: home to God and home to find out what family really means. When we pray the Rosary, 'the Gospel made prayer,' 'the School of Mary' (John Paul II's words), we spend time in relationship with Christ our God Incarnate while we discover again our relationship with each other.

We may now need to re-educate our people (and ourselves!) to understand what the Rosary is and what it can be, but it will certainly be worth it! As a family learns to pray in this 'School' (doing what they can, even if that means starting with praying just a few 'Hail Marys' after dinner), they can take a short break from the perpetual noise and frenetic activity to which we are addicted today. They find some peace as they listen to themselves, to one another, and to the Lord. And they'll discover they have a Mother in Mary who is always ready to wrap them in love.

Father Peyton summarised the

benefits of praying the Family Rosary. His words may help us to motivate families:

- To establish the presence of God in the home; 'For where two or three are gathered together for my sake, there I am in the midst of them' (Matt 27:20).
- To provide an example for the younger members of the family to carry on throughout life.
- To strengthen the parents' feelings of responsibility toward the children's spiritual life.
- To establish and maintain a peaceful spirit within the family.
- To obtain the special grace that is gained through oral collective prayer, which has a special value of its own.
- To create a means to understanding, unity, respect and obedience within the family.
- To assure the discipline of the will implied in the faithful attention to family prayer.
- To enlist this aid to faith as a means of keeping alive a solid living practical faith in the family.
- To pray for spiritual and material needs of the family, such as sustenance, health, forgiveness, strength of perseverance and strength against temptation.
- To serve as a reminder to offer indulgences for deceased members of the family.
- To petition for success for each member of the family in his or her vocation in life.
- To gain plenary indulgences that are attached to the daily recitation of the family Rosary.

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The Father Patrick Peyton Memorial Centre,  
in Attymass, Ballina, is a place of prayer and  
reflection.  
For information on the Centre  
call 096-45374.*