

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Jun 16th 2016

My family which consists of myself, my husband and my three sons ages 15, 14 and 11 have said the rosary almost every night for about 7 years now. Therefore I knew my youngest son would relate to this gospel from Matthew 6:7 in which "Jesus said to his disciples: 'In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words.'" I can tell from the boredom he shows when we pray the rosary that he perceives it as babbling and he doubts the importance of their meaning. Honestly, as an adult who has said the rosary and numerous memorized prayers on and off throughout my life I also sometimes wonder if I am wasting my time babbling off these prayers.

And yet I know there is value to having words like those from the "Our Father" that come so easily when my heart and mind are frozen, unengaged or bored. Sometimes I simply am not in the mood to pray from the heart. Often as I finish a busy day of work, motherhood, being a wife and perhaps getting a few house chores done I would rather watch TV, surf the net or go straight to bed than gather with my family in the living room to pray for what can be 15 to 40 minutes. Don't get me wrong.

There are many evenings when I cherish the time together with my family doing the Ignatian Examen or reading a scripture passage and discussing it or reading the story of a saint and even saying the loving prayerful words of the "Hail Mary" or "Our Father" in the form of the rosary.

But sometimes I am like my youngest son and perceive the prayers to be just babbling. Why then, do I do this nightly ritual, you ask.

The first reason is the power. I will never forget the first night when I learned of my father's unexpected terminal cancer diagnosis. He had emergency surgery that day and I was told he had less than 3 months to live. As I spent that first night in the hospital on a cot next to my dad's bed, I desired to pray more sincerely than I had ever in my life. And yet all I could mouth were the words to the rosary as the tears rolled down my cheeks. I said those babbling words as fast as I could over and over again for hours that night. God knew that my heart's prayer was "let him live" and yet my verbal words were the "Hail Mary" and the "Our Father" over and over again. I babbled but God heard the power of my prayer.

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