Mary, Mother to Our Families

by J.D. Flynn

Before our wedding, my wife and I asked a holy priest for marriage advice. He didn't hesitate: "Pray the Rosary every single day," he said, "and the rest will work itself out."

His advice was clear. But of course we didn't take it. In fact, it took years for us to get into the habit of praying the Rosary together regularly and even longer to make the Rosary a daily part of our life as a family.

Family Rosary happens at bedtime now. Our oldest, Max and Pia, climb into their beds, while Daniel sits on Kate's lap. Pia usually calls us to prayer.

"Prayers, Dad," she says. "Fold your hands. Like this."

I fold my hands like she does and then I invite my family into a mystery of the Rosary.

The kids are little. We only pray a decade or sometimes two. It never takes as long as we think it will. Some nights, thinking about what needs to get done after kids go to sleep, we're tempted to skip our family Rosary time. But the kids, now at least, remind us every night that it's time.

We say our prayers and then three little voices sing *Salve Regina*. I think Our Lady must love those voices. I sure do.

I don't know how exactly the Rosary makes a difference for our family but I know it does. I know that we're giving our children the habit of nightly prayer and a comfortable familiarity with the Blessed Mother. I know we're inviting them to see the mysteries of Christ's own life, through the eyes of his mother. I hope we're inviting them to bring the mysteries of their own lives to Christ through the intercession of Our Lady.

And I know that it's become a grace to sit quietly with our children at the end of the day—to put busyness and bickering and distraction aside—and to turn together to the Lord.

Mary, I can see in the mysteries of the Rosary, is bringing our family closer to Jesus and closer to one another. And if she's becoming another mother my children can turn to I know what a grace that is.

I remember, vividly, turning to Our Lady one night as an anxious young man, uncertain about vocation, and trust, and Providence. I remember asking her to be a mother to me. I remember telling her how much I needed a mother's love. And I remember that the very next day, Our Lord started to bring a new kind of peace into my life. Our Lady began a conversion for me and she helped me discover that God was calling me to marry my wife and to start our family.

In the first years of our marriage, struggling together with the painful cross of infertility, my wife and I turned to the Blessed Mother together. In the times when we didn't know if we could turn to the Lord, we never doubted that we could turn to his mother. We knew she would understand. Even if we lacked the confidence to trust, she would pray for us and all would be well.

In our early years of parenting, our children faced serious health struggles. Our daughter spent more than a year in an oncology ward. We had no idea what we were doing but we knew that we could turn to the Blessed Mother.

We didn't know how to be parents but she did. She knew the uncertainty of parenting. She knew the fears. She knew the struggles. And she was a comfort to us. When we didn't know the words to speak, she prayed for us.

Our kids have an extraordinary mother. My wife is holy, and beautiful, and kind. I think that's why my kids love the Blessed Mother so much: they know what a mother's love is and the idea that someone loves them like that in heaven is an exciting prospect. As they get older and we can't be with them all the time, I'm glad they know they have a mother to turn to. I'm glad they know they have our Mother beside them.

We haven't always been faithful to the daily Rosary. But Our Lady is patient. She understands. She's with us, reminding us to be gentle, to be patient, and to turn to the Lord. Our family is graced through Our Lady and yours can be too.

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