



The Armor of Faith

Topic Summary: Prayer and the Holy Spirit Part V **Prayer and the Rosary**



Introduction

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Our panelists provide support and catechesis for religious formation at St. Philip Benizi Catholic Mission in Cedaredge CO. Our panelists are also in the process of discernment and study to become lay Dominicans who are also known as the Order of Preachers. So, welcome to our panelists as well as our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray.

As a reminder, we have an email address where you can write us with your thoughts, questions, observations, prayers you would like to share, or topic requests. That email is armoroffaithradio@gmail.com. While we cannot promise to answer every email we receive, we will definitely use them to plan future shows.

Discussion:

Last week, we talked about various forms of prayer. While there are a number of categories by which we may use to classify forms of prayer, we mostly discussed the forms called out in the

Catechism of the Catholic Church, specifically the forms outlined in articles 2626 to 2649, which include: Blessing and Adoration, Petition, Intercession, Thanksgiving, and Praise. One might think that these are perfectly natural forms of prayer, but Catholics are often criticized in the ways in which we pray. One of those criticisms is associated with intercessory prayer as well as prayers which are considered vain repetitions, citing Matthew 6:7, in which Jesus says, “*In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words.*”

Now, I should mention here, how scripture is translated can influence our understanding. For example, here is the same verse according to other translations.

DRA: And when you are praying, **speak not much**, as **the heathens**. For they think that in their **much speaking** they may be heard.

KJV: But when ye pray, use not **vain repetitions**, as **the heathen** do: for they think that they shall be heard for their **much speaking**.

NIV: And when you pray, do not keep on **babbling** like **pagans**, for they think they will be heard because of their **many words**.

RSVCE: “And in praying do not heap up **empty phrases** as the **Gentiles** do; for they think that they will be heard for their **many words**.”

So, from these different translations, can we discern what Jesus was trying to tell us? In one case, we see the instruction of Jesus as advising us that we do not need many words in our prayers (“speak not much”). In another case, we see the phrase “vain repetitions.” In still another, we see the instruction as against “babbling.” In still another, we see the words, “empty phrases.” Is there a common theme of these translations which might help us with comprehension of what Jesus wanted us to understand about prayer?

Perhaps it would make more sense if we look at the instruction in light of the forms of prayer common of those of which Jesus spoke. Still, we may still have a challenge, for we see the criticism of Jesus being directed at heathens, pagans, or Gentiles. Well, this muddies the waters a bit. So who was Jesus really holding up as an example of what not to do?

If we look for the common thread, each of these references are to those who lift their prayers to false gods. The babbling, vain repetition, wordy, or empty phrases used as prayers are not being lifted to the Heavenly Father, through Jesus, rather, they are empty because they are either being said for public accolade or to appease a false god. They are empty prayers because they are directed to an empty destination. They have no meaning for they are directed to what does not exist and therefore, cannot answer.

Let's look at the scripture in the larger context in which it is written.

5 “When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. 6 But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door,

and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. 7 In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him. (Matthew 6:5-8)

The preface in this context begins with the purpose of our prayer. Is it for public consumption or a conversation with God? Jesus cautions against praying like the “hypocrites.” According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the word “hypocrite” is defined as: “a person who puts on a false appearance of virtue or religion.” In other words, Jesus instructs us that our prayer must be sincere, not for appearances in social circles or an earthly reward, but because of our desire for a true relationship with God and the reward which may only come from Him.

The conclusion of the instruction is that our prayer must not be one of – well, let's select the one by which Catholics receive the most criticism, which is – prayers of “vain repetition.” So is the issue one that our prayers are offensive (or even blasphemous, as some contend) because of repetition? For this, we should look at another teaching of Jesus, which is found in Luke 18:1-8, where Jesus presents the parable of “The Persistent Widow.”

1 Then he told them a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary. He said, 2 “There was a judge in a certain town who neither feared God nor respected any human being. 3 And a widow in that town used to come to him and say, ‘Render a just decision for me against my adversary.’ 4 For a long time the judge was unwilling, but eventually he thought, ‘While it is true that I neither fear God nor respect any human being, 5 because this widow keeps bothering me I shall deliver a just decision for her lest she finally come and strike me.’” 6 The Lord said, “Pay attention to what the dishonest judge says. 7 Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night? Will he be slow to answer them? 8 I tell you, he will see to it that justice is done for them speedily. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (Luke 18:1-8)

So, here, we see that we are called to pray persistently. If we are raising a prayer of petition, how can we be persistent without repeating ourselves? As another example, we can look to the behavior of Jesus as He prayed. Let's look at the “Agony in the Garden,” as presented to us in Mark 14:32-42. It reads:

32 Then they came to a place named Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” 33 He took with him Peter, James, and John, and began to be troubled and distressed. 34 Then he said to them, “My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch.” 35 He advanced a little and fell to the ground and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass by him; 36 he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will.” 37 When he returned he found them asleep. He said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? 38 Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” 39 Withdrawing again, he prayed, saying the same thing. 40 Then he returned once more and found them asleep, for they could not keep their eyes open and did not know what to answer him. 41 He returned a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough.

The hour has come. Behold, the Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners. 42 Get up, let us go. See, my betrayer is at hand."

Here, we see that Jesus repeated His prayer to the Heavenly Father, consistent with the teaching of Luke 8:18, so, the issue is not the repetition, but the vanity. Merriam-Webster defines "vain" as, "having or showing undue or excessive pride in one's appearance or achievements," which is consistent with the admonishment of Jesus to not be like the hypocrites, in other words, the concern for appearance before others as opposed to our relationship with God. Vain is also defined as "marked by futility or ineffectualness," or "having no real value," which is consistent with what I mentioned earlier about prayer offered up to false gods. If there is no one to receive and act upon our prayer, then, such prayer is useless.

(Question: So, with that background, let's ask the question: **Are the prayers of the Rosary vain repetition?)**

Another criticism of Catholics is that by praying the Rosary, we are praying to Mary and not to God. As I observe various discussions on the subject, a common theme I see is the assertion that Catholics worship Mary, which we do not, for worship is reserved for God and God alone. Still, the critics present our respect of Mary as somehow placing Mary in competition with God or that we are fixated on Mary while ignoring the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Nothing is further from the truth, for Mary would have no place if she was not first chosen by God. If Mary means anything to us, it is because of the example of her obedience and that she consistently encourages us to a deeper relationship with her Son.

One more criticism I often see about the Rosary is that we have only six prayers to God, referring to the "Our Father," and fifty prayers to Mary, referring to the five decades of the "Hail Mary." So, let's examine the prayers of the Rosary. It begins with the sign of the cross as we say, "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." This is a short prayer the critics seems to overlook, but the math is not the issue as much as to whom we are praying.

The next thing we pray is the Apostle's Creed, which is a reflection of our faith and recited by both Catholics and many Protestant denominations.

The Apostles' Creed: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day He arose again; He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from there He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen

(Question: I should have mentioned, that as we say the Rosary, we are called to meditate and reflect upon the meaning of the mysteries and prayers. In other words, the prayer of the Rosary is not only about the prayers which we say, it is about what we reflect upon in our heart. **If we examine what is within the Apostle's Creed, what is the central focus or theme?)**

After the Apostle's Creed, we say the "Our Father."

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name: Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread: and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation: but deliver us from evil. Amen.

This is the prayer Jesus offered as an example of how we are to pray.

Then, and this is where we get into trouble, because we say three “Hail Mary's.” Again, the concern is that we are praying to Mary and not to God. What the critics do not seem to observe is that the “Hail Mary” is rooted in scripture. Let's look at the prayer.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen

The first segment, “Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women” is a reflection of Luke 1:28. According to the DRA version, it reads: “*And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.*” Of course, this wording is not the same in more modern translations, for example, the NABRE reads, “*And coming to her, he said, “Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.”*”

(Question: Despite the differences in translation, the theme we see is that Mary is favored and chosen by God. **If God chose Mary and held her in favor, then, what meaning should that have with us?)**

The second segment, “and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus,” is a reflection of Luke 1:42, which, the DRA version, reads, “*And she [Elizabeth, cousin of Mary] cried out with a loud voice, and said: Blessed art thou [Mary] among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.*”

This is also reinforced in the canticle of Mary as written in Luke 1:46-55, which reads:

46 And Mary said:

“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
47 my spirit rejoices in God my savior.
48 For he has looked upon his handmaid’s lowliness;
behold, **from now on will all ages call me blessed.**
49 The Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
50 His mercy is from age to age
to those who fear him.
51 He has shown might with his arm,
dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart.
52 He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones
but lifted up the lowly.
53 The hungry he has filled with good things;
the rich he has sent away empty.
54 He has helped Israel his servant,
remembering his mercy,

55 according to his promise to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

(Question: So, in this segment we observe the greeting by Elizabeth to Mary. **What is the nature of this greeting and what meaning should it have for us?)**

The prayer concludes: “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen”

(Question: As we discussed, the first two segments of the prayer are reflections of the scripture which tells us that God favored Mary, that He chose her to be the mother of His only begotten Son, and that she is blessed among women for what God has asked of her. It is the third segment that seems to irritate the critics, because we ask Mary to pray for us. The concern is that we offer more prayers to Mary than God. **Is this a valid concern? If not, why?)**

(Question: Again, the concern of the critics of the Rosary are that too few of the prayers are lifted up to God. **To whom are we expecting Mary to pray when we ask her to pray for us?)**

As we conclude the three “Hail Mary's,” we then say a “Glory Be.”

“Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.”

Many also add the Fatima prayer as well:

"O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Your Mercy."

Then, we begin reflection on the mysteries. By tradition, the set of mysteries we use changes by the day of the week we say the Rosary, however, we may also select a set depending upon the nature of the reason or occasion we are praying the Rosary. The sets of the mysteries are:

The Joyful Mysteries (a reflection upon the birth of Christ): The Annunciation (Luke 1:26–38); The Visitation (Luke 1:39–56); The Nativity (Luke 2:1–21); The Presentation (Luke 2:22–38); The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:41–52). Traditionally said on Mondays and Saturdays.

The Sorrowful Mysteries (a reflection upon the passion and death of Jesus): The Agony of Jesus in the Garden (Matthew 26:36–56); The Scourging at the Pillar (Matthew 27:26); The Crowning with Thorns (Matthew 27:27–31); The Carrying of the Cross (Matthew 27:32); The Crucifixion (Matthew 27:33–56). Traditionally said on Tuesdays and Fridays.

The Glorious Mysteries (a reflection upon the resurrection and the glories of heaven): The Resurrection (John 20:1–29); The Ascension (Luke 24:36–53); The Descent of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1–41); The Assumption of Mary, the Mother of God, into heaven; The Coronation of Mary in heaven. Traditionally said on Wednesdays and Sundays.

The Luminous Mysteries (In 2002, Pope Saint John Paul II added these mysteries which are a reflection of Jesus as the Light of the world): The Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13–16); The Wedding Feast at Cana (John 2:1–11); The Preaching of the coming of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14–15); The Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1–8); The Institution of the Holy Eucharist (Matthew 26).

(Question: What role does reflection upon the mysteries play as we pray the Rosary?)

After the final decade of the Rosary, we say the “Salve Regina” and the “Prayer After the Rosary.”

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy! our life, our sweetness, and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley, of tears. Turn, then, O most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us; and after this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus; O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary. Pray for us O Holy Mother of God. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

O God, whose only begotten Son, by his Life, Death, and Resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant, we beseech thee, that by meditating on these mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

May the divine assistance remain always with us.

And may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

(Question: The main concern of the critics is that the Rosary focuses too much on Mary and ignores the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. What should we tell the critics about the blessings of praying the Rosary?)

(CCC: 2708) Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. This mobilization of faculties is necessary in order to deepen our convictions of faith, prompt the conversion of our heart, and strengthen our will to follow Christ. Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ, as in *lectio divina* or the rosary. This form of prayerful reflection is of great value, but Christian prayer should go further: to the knowledge of the love of the Lord Jesus, to union with him.

(CCC: 2709) What is contemplative prayer? St. Teresa answers: “Contemplative prayer [oración mental] in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us.” Contemplative prayer seeks him “whom my soul loves.” It is Jesus, and in him, the Father. We seek him, because to desire him is always the beginning of love, and we seek him in that pure faith which causes us to be born of him and to live in him. In this inner prayer we can still meditate, but our attention is fixed on the Lord himself.

(Observation: While it is true that we ask Mary to pray with us 53 times during the course of praying the Rosary, the focus of the Rosary is the life, death, resurrection, of our Lord and Savior as well as the heavenly blessings we may receive through the fullness of faith. Praying the Rosary is not about saying the prayers, for if that is all it is, then, the critics are correct, but,

as we reflect upon the mysteries of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit during the course of our prayer, we open our hearts to the fullness of faith which God offers to us through His only begotten Son. It is also an opportunity to recharge ourselves with the meaning of our faith so we are strengthened to face down the trials and tribulations we face during the course of our daily journey.)

Quotes:

“The Rosary is the ‘weapon’ for these times.” -Saint Padre Pio

“Give me an army saying the Rosary and I will conquer the world.” – Blessed Pope Pius IX

“The greatest method of praying is to pray the Rosary.” – Saint Francis de Sales

“The Rosary is a powerful weapon to put the demons to flight and to keep oneself from sin...If you desire peace in your hearts, in your homes, and in your country, assemble each evening to recite the Rosary. Let not even one day pass without saying it, no matter how burdened you may be with many cares and labors.” – Pope Pius XI

“The Rosary is the book of the blind, where souls see and there enact the greatest drama of love the world has ever known; it is the book of the simple, which initiates them into mysteries and knowledge more satisfying than the education of other men; it is the book of the aged, whose eyes close upon the shadow of this world, and open on the substance of the next. The power of the Rosary is beyond description.” – Archbishop Fulton Sheen

The Rosary is a prayer both so humble and simple and a theologically rich in Biblical content. I beg you to pray it. – St. John Paul II

Final Thoughts: I must confess, as I began my journey into Catholicism, I resisted praying the Rosary. The Rosary was something the wife and kids did while I was off at work. Part of the reason I resisted it is that I did not know the prayers. I simply did not have them memorized, but that is a rather lame excuse, because there are any number of cards or pamphlets available to help a beginner to learn and say the prayers. If I am completely honest with myself, the real reason was that I did not comprehend the fullness of faith within it.

My journey towards appreciation of the Rosary began as I was called upon to participate in the prayers as a member of the Knights of Columbus. Within a group, I was able to follow along, but I still did not fully grasp the fullness of faith which it offers. The day finally came where I began to incorporate the Rosary into my personal prayer.

As my daughter struggled with cancer, the Rosary became ever important to me. I prayed a number of Rosaries for her. I am sure the critics will spring forward to point out that the outcome proves that God was offended by the repetition of my prayer; that my prayer was useless, but they do not understand. The Rosary was not only for my daughter, it also brought me peace as we engaged the battle. I know some will measure my prayer by the outcomes in this world, but that is not the point.

In Mark 14:36, Jesus said, “*Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will.*” So, was the prayer of Jesus useless, because we know the outcome was the cross? Jesus knew the reason for what was to happen. This is why He said to His Heavenly Father, “*but not what I will but what you will,*” for Jesus knew that what God the Father allows is always for a greater good to come. We do not always see this in the moment, but if we trust in Him, if we trust He will hear our prayers; we can also trust that a greater good awaits.

If you are like I was, resisting saying the Rosary, fearful of learning all the prayers; fear not. Look it up, get a card or pamphlet, set a goal with your family or find a friend or group of friends and begin to pray. Find 15 minutes a day that you can set aside to pray and reflect upon the blessings of our faith. Remember, it is not about simply repeating the words. It is about the opportunity to reflect upon the fullness of our faith and the sacrifice made for us from upon the cross so that we may be forgiven of our sins, cleansed of our iniquities, so our robes may be washed white in the blood of the Lamb, so we may have the opportunity to walk with Jesus in His kingdom where love is shared by all, where there is no pain or affliction, and where evil is not allowed to follow.

A thought to keep in mind. As we say the Rosary, we open the door of our hearts to God. Let us let Him fill it with His love.

Wrap Up: Well, once more, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we pick up our discussion with engaging the Holy Spirit within our prayer life.

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to open and discuss Your Holy Word. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**, and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

Next Session: Prayer and the Holy Spirit Part VI: Engaging the Holy Spirit