

There's a funny thing that tends to happen as two people grow close to one another. This could happen to friends or siblings or significant others. But as two people grow close to one another, they start to become like each other. They start to use the same words and phrases; they start to tell the same stories; they even laugh at the same jokes, and maybe even laughing in the same way. You've probably noticed this too, maybe in someone else, maybe even in yourself. I bet our nature as social creatures has something to do with this, but whatever the cause, it's true: the more time we spend with someone else, the more we become like him or her.

And this phenomenon is true not only in our human relationships, but in our spiritual relationships, too. Think of the saints. Throughout their lives, they became more and more like Jesus. St. Francis of Assisi became poor like Jesus, relying on others for everything. St. Teresa of Calcutta loved like Jesus, caring for the poorest of the poor and the sickest of the sick. St. Dominic and St. Louis de Montfort preached like Jesus, winning the hearts and souls of those who listened to them. St. Catherine of Siena prayed like Jesus, being drawn up to God in mystical experiences of love. St. John Vianney offered forgiveness like Jesus, spending hours and hours in the confessional to give mercy to sinners.

The saints think like Jesus, they talk like Jesus, they act like Jesus. Why? Because they spend their time with Jesus. The saints never cease drawing near to the Lord in prayer. When Jesus is most important person in someone's life, when Jesus is the one with whom someone spends most of their time, that person is bound to become more like Jesus.

Today we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. And this feast reminds us that the rosary, given to us by our Blessed Mother, is one of the most powerful ways of drawing near to Jesus in prayer. Apart from the Eucharist, which is the Real Presence of Jesus Himself, nothing is more effective for bringing us close to Jesus than the rosary. No other prayer will help us truly to spend time with Jesus, no other prayer will help us to become like Jesus as much as the rosary does.

What is it about the rosary that makes it such a powerful prayer, such a powerful way of drawing near to the Lord? In a word, everything. Everything about the rosary makes it a powerful means of prayer, a most effective way to unite ourselves to Christ.

Look at the prayers that are recited in the rosary: The Apostles Creed - a summary of the faith that we believe and that we professed at baptism; the Our Father - the perfect prayer and the model for all prayer because it was given to us directly from Jesus; the Hail Mary - a prayer which is eminently scriptural, repeating the words first spoken to Mary by the Archangel Gabriel and by St. Elizabeth; The Glory be - a great prayer of praise to our God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Look at what we do when we say the rosary. The rosary is said on that familiar set of beads, which means there is a physical component. The simple movement of our fingers over the beads can help to calm our mind and our heart. It can help us to focus more intensely on the Lord. (It's like the original fidget spinner...)

Look at where the rosary leads our mind and our heart. As we pray the prayers and touch the beads, our mind is called to meditate upon and to contemplate the mysteries of the rosary. The events of the life of Jesus and Mary from the Gospels become our food for meditation. This, most of all, is where we get to spend time with Jesus and Mary. And each set of mysteries give us a different focus, a different way of being with Jesus and Mary.

In the Joyful mysteries, we are present with Mary at the Annunciation, when she responded "Yes!" to God's plan of salvation, "Yes!" to becoming the Mother of God. And we learn from her how to say "Yes!" to God in our own lives. We are present for the birth of our Lord and we can rejoice with the choirs of angels: Glory to God in the Highest!

In the Luminous mysteries, we walk with Jesus on earth. We see His baptism by St. John the Baptist in the Jordan, His first miracle at the Wedding of Cana. We join His Apostles on Mt. Tabor for the Transfiguration, and at the Last Supper, when Jesus shares Himself with us in the Eucharist.

In the Sorrowful mysteries, we can keep prayerful watch with the Apostles during Jesus' Agony in the Garden. We walk the way of the Cross with Jesus. We stand next to our Sorrowful Mother as Jesus hands over His spirit to the Father.

In the Glorious mysteries, we can enter the empty tomb with Peter and John and experience the reality that Jesus is Risen from the dead. We gather with Mary and the Apostles in the Upper Room as the Holy Spirit descends at Pentecost. We can witness the heavenly celebrations as Mary is assumed, body and soul, into heaven, and as she is crowned with 12 stars as queen of heaven and earth.

When we enter into these mysteries with our mind and our heart, we are spending time with Jesus and Mary. In meditation and contemplation, we can hear their words and feel their touch. These personal interactions—this time spent with Jesus and Mary—allows us to become more like Mary, the perfect disciple, and more like Jesus, our Lord and our God.

The goal of our lives is to get to heaven, to become saints. If we wish to reach that goal, if we wish to become saints, we must spend time with Jesus so that we become more like Him, so that His words become our words, so that His love becomes our love. Let us take up the rosary as a sure and safe and quick way of spending time with Jesus, as a way of becoming like Jesus. May the prayers and the mysteries of the holy rosary lead us all to greater union with Mary our Mother and with Jesus Christ our Lord.