

In the Immaculate Heart of Mary

'How I met [my] Mother'

Throughout the years I, like most other Catholics, had always simply heard and read theologies around Mary and the Rosary without any authentic understanding of and faith in her role in my Christian life. I remember avoiding the rosary as much as possible, yet I held no grave objections to it. Feeling powerless against a particular vice in my life at some point I decided to call on Mary's help as I resolved to complete a 54-day rosary novena. Amazed by the graces I received to conquer this vice, I never stopped praying the rosary daily, yet I still had no personal relationship with Our Lady — a concept both foreign and scary to many Christians, Catholic or not. I suppose many indeed fear making Mary an idol, a replacement of Jesus. But who is Mary without Jesus? Upon enough research, study and reflection on the Scriptures and Tradition one realises just how profoundly and mysteriously “blessed” this chosen woman is, and how a rejection of her identity and purpose is irrational.

My own relationship with Mary changed during and after I committed to a 33-day private pilgrimage in preparation for consecration to her Immaculate Heart. One can find a few versions of such a pilgrimage on the web. At the end of my private pilgrimage, about six years ago, I had a profound encounter with Our Lady. Pope Francis, in a [letter](#) to all “Born-again Christians”, explained that Catholics “do pray to Mary and the saints, but when we do, we do so through the Holy Spirit”. This is precisely what I experienced during this powerful encounter, i.e. the Holy Spirit leading me to Mary, more specifically to consecrate myself to her Immaculate Heart. In fact, it was directly after praying the consecration prayer wholeheartedly that I began to cry as my spirit experienced a deep sense of joy, peace and happiness. It was as if Mary drew near to me at that very moment wanting me to know that she has heeded my desire to belong to her, to be her son beholding his mother (Jn 19:27) and placing his existence in her graceful care. I have entrusted each day and element of my life and my family to her motherly love ever since. I continue to ponder on her role as the Mother of God the Son and the Church, and as the Queen of Heaven and Earth. As I reflect on the joyful, luminous, sorrowful and glorious mysteries I find the Spirit revealing more and more profound things to me. I delight in praying the rosary increasingly from my heart as I leap into the arms of my

Mother and Queen, trusting that her sole desire is to lead me ever closer to Jesus; to teach me to know, follow, love and serve him. For which human being knows more than Mary how to glorify God through Christ?

“Call within a call” and Covid-19

I recall browsing on YouTube on the day before South Africa’s national lockdown in the face of Covid-19. Somehow, at the top of my list appeared a [video](#) explaining the power of praying the entire Rosary (20 mysteries) each day. I felt unusually drawn to it and after mere minutes of watching I knew that the Spirit was calling me to make praying the entire rosary a daily habit. While I knew it required sacrifice, I felt immensely honoured by this call and joyfully responded with my yes. Since the first day of lockdown I have striven to pray accordingly devoting each set of five mysteries to particular intentions pertaining to myself, my family, my ministry, the Church and the world facing unique challenges. Why God asked this of me at the advent of the lockdown I do not really know, but I trust the reasons are significant. I share this personal call with you in light of an article I recently read on the [‘Miracle of Hiroshima’](#). Eight Jesuit community members, and the church rectory in which they resided, survived an atomic bomb blast that killed 80 000 people instantly. The rectory was situated a mere eight blocks from the blast. Although thousands more died after the blast from radiation, these men defied the laws of science and remained alive and healthy to tell their tale for decades to come. When asked why they believed this miraculous grace was bestowed upon them they stated, “We believe that we survived because we were living the message of Fatima. We lived and prayed the Rosary daily in that house.”

I find this account and other miracle stories attributed to the power of the rosary always echoing in my heart when I pray the rosary, especially when I do so with my family. My spirit is always at peace in the face of all evils, including the Covid crisis, and I have a sense of fulfilment in my duty as a Christian interceding for peoples both familiar and strange. Faithfully praying the rosary might not warrant me, my family or any of us such miraculous grace as it did the Jesuits of Hiroshima, but I am certain that many graces, known or unknown, befall those who entrust their existence to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Coronavirus or not, war or peace, injustice and oppression or justice and respect for human dignity - in this Heart I choose to remain.

by Dillon J. Naicker