

# JOCELYNE'S RESOURCE-OF-THE-MONTH: January 2017

*My Commentary on: The Holy Rosary & on "Mary's Gift Of Mercy: John Paul 2 and the Second Greatest Story Ever Told"*

Online Video → <http://www.faithandreason.com/2013/02/marys-gift-of-mercy-john-paul-ii-and-the-second-greatest-story-ever-told/>

*Fr. Michael Gaitley, MIC, Director of the Association of Marian Helpers, delivers a talk to Franciscan University students about Mary's role in Divine Mercy and how Saint John Paul 2 played an instrumental role in the spreading of this message.*

## The Woman Who Led Me Closer to Jesus

Years ago, after having questioned my faith and in the midst of a great personal struggle, I longed for a deeper relationship with my Lord. I told Him so in prayer and it was then that the Good Lord, through grace, responded. It was not an audible voice, but more a whisper that came from the depths of my soul: "You need to know my Mother," He told me.

But she seemed to be so untouchable. I didn't think I could get close to her: a woman chosen by God for such an amazing task, perfect in every way, sinless, a virgin and a mother at the same time. How could I relate? I'm so imperfect, so sinful, so ordinary. I had her on an unreachable pedestal. All I could do was look up at her... this woman, as I imagined her, surrounded by a bright light and endowed with a halo (cue angelic chorus). She was so foreign to me, out of reach, beyond my understanding.

God would not leave me alone on the issue, however, and He placed in me a longing to know His mother, constantly reminding me of the words He had whispered to my heart. I decided, therefore, that I would pray the Rosary daily. "What better way is there to get to know Mary," I thought, "than by praying her Holy Rosary." I had actually been meaning to do this for a long time. During my maternity leave from teaching, I had used some of the time to put together lessons and resources for when I returned to my classroom. I had planned on teaching a unit on the Rosary to my students and I created a how-to handout on the Rosary, the Mysteries, its prayers, and its 15 promises. I printed off my handout of information and used it myself as I became familiar with the prayer.

I began to pray the Rosary daily and I learned so much about my faith in doing so. I would pray the Scriptural Rosary and meditate on the various Mysteries of the faith. God revealed much to me through this practice. I also found audio versions of the Rosary (we have listed these on our website for you). I varied the method of praying the Rosary because I didn't want to become bored with it.

All the while, I was constantly searching for Truth and trying to work through some Catholic teachings that I was struggling to understand. I had come to the realization that Jesus is Lord and that He left us a Church, the Catholic Church, a Church that would not lead me astray, despite the fact that it is made up of many imperfect individuals (see my December commentary for more on that). I nevertheless found some of the teachings of His Church difficult to swallow, and I was constantly searching for answers.

In desperation for the answers to these questions that most plagued my heart with anguish at the time, I decided that I would pray my very first novena. I must mention that up to this point, I had not been aware of this devotion. I had been reading a Catholic novel, which mentioned novena prayer, and, unsure of what it was, I had searched the Internet for a definition. What I found was that a novena is a nine-day period of prayer for something specific, usually something serious or of urgent nature. I felt that I needed an urgent response to the questions that caused my heart so much disquiet, so I decided that I would pray a novena in hope of answers. I resolved to pray the "Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Novena," as I had also recently learned that the most blessed Mother of our Lord is our greatest advocate, interceding for us when we ask her. Jesus, I learned, has a very difficult time refusing her and I really, really wanted answers. My heart ached for peace concerning these issues. (Maybe I'll touch more on the specifics of what these struggles were in a future commentary. Stay tuned...)

So I prayed... and I was thrilled to find that I received some answers! Little by little, over the nine days of prayer, I wrote down in my journal the insight that seemed to just pop into my consciousness. For this, I thanked God. I was so grateful and humbled that He loved me enough to answer me, despite my unworthiness. I was also grateful to the Mother of God for her intercession

in my regard. I felt in my heart like I had my answers, but I wanted to make sure that what I felt had been revealed to me was the truth.

I, therefore, made an appointment to speak with my parish priest to discuss these questions with him. I did not tell him the answers that I thought had been revealed to me. I only listened. He confirmed the truth of what I had written and even used some of the same language I had to explain his answers. I was in awe! I went home, and consumed in gratitude and in love of my Heavenly Mother, I informally pledged my life to her service and to the service of her Son, my Brother and Saviour, Jesus Christ. At that time, I didn't know that a personal consecration to Jesus through Mary was a "thing" that Catholics formally did.

Then, while looking for a baptism gift for my niece, I was drawn to a section of books outlining consecration to Jesus through Mary. As there were a few different books there on the subject, I said a quick prayer asking the Holy Spirit to guide me to the one that would be best for me. Then one night, a short time later, I was unable to sleep, plagued with sadness over a difficult life situation; with eyes full of tears, I prayed: "God, I trust You. This situation saddens me, but I trust You and I know that it will work out. Please guide me." I immediately felt the urge to leave my bedroom and went with my journal and my smartphone to my office. I felt drawn to listen to a Franciscan University of Steubenville talk by Father Michael Gaitley on YouTube entitled, "Mary's Gift Of Mercy: John Paul 2 and the Second Greatest Story Ever Told." It was exactly what I needed. Fr. Gaitley spoke of Saint John Paul's mission to spread the message of Divine Mercy to the world and of consecration to Jesus through Mary. He actually spoke of the process outlined in the book I had just bought! Father Michael provided me hope that I too could be a saint and that consecration to Jesus through Mary would help me get there. Let me clarify that I am currently far from this goal of sainthood! I do, however, have faith in God's love and mercy. I trust that He will direct me there by showering His grace upon me, so that when I die, I will be welcomed into His eternal Kingdom.

I am consistently amazed by God's love for flawed and unworthy little me. He keeps making this love known to me in so many comforting ways. I am so grateful. I am also grateful for the love and protection of our Heavenly Mother, Mary. I have grown so much in love for her, and I have felt the abundance of her love for me as well. Mary, like a good mother, has taught me to pray and has led me toward her Son. I have now developed a great fondness for the Rosary. Some days, I have found that I have no drive to pray it, but once I get started, I find that I'm glad I did. Our Lady intercedes for me and The Holy Spirit constantly reveals new truths and insights to me through meditation on the Mysteries of the Gospel during this remarkable prayer.

In closing, I would just like to sum up that it is not a sin to have questions about your faith; it is not a sin to seek the Truth. Even Mary and Joseph didn't understand Jesus at times. An example of this is when Jesus was lost in Jerusalem for three days. After having found Him, Mary and Joseph expressed the sorrow that they experienced in their search for Him, to which Jesus responds, "How is it that you sought me? did you not know, that I must be about my father's business?" The Gospel then says, "And they understood not the word that he spoke unto them (Luke 2: 49-50)." There is a great lesson to be learned here. Mary and Joseph sought Jesus and they found Him. When Mary didn't understand, she pondered His words "in her heart (Luke 2: 51)." We must, therefore, do likewise. If we pray constantly, practice patience, have faith and contemplate the things of God in our hearts, the answers will come. For God promises us:

"Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened (Matthew 7:7-8)."

I have definitely found this to be true in my own life. Thanks be to God!

On another note, it is no coincidence, I'm sure, that I felt compelled to write about the, "Mother of my Lord (Luke 1:43)" this month, as today (January 1st) is the feast of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. This is a holy day of obligation for Catholics celebrating the maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Catholicism is so rich! I don't think I could ever learn everything there is to know about this beautiful Church that Jesus left for us, His children. So, that being said, instead of making the usual, banal type of New Year's resolution this year, (ie. eat healthier, exercise more, etc.) I have made some spiritual resolutions. I invite you to consider doing the same, if you haven't already done so. Your resolution might include seeking the truth, praying more, praying the Rosary, learning more about your faith or looking into consecration to Jesus through Mary. Do this and I assure you, your life will be changed!

I wish you a very merry Christmas and an abundance of blessings as you journey through this New Year!

Yours in Christ,  
Jocelyne