



November Reflection –

*A Snap Shot of a Living Prayer, from a Treasury of a Living Faith:*

This year, because the Feast of All Souls fell on Monday, I was home, remembering deceased loved ones and grappling with concern for my mother, whose health had taken another downward turn, after already 6 weeks in the hospital. I wanted to focus my wandering mind toward prayer, and decided the Rosary would be a good prayer to enter. (Although this prayer is growing in acceptance among non-Catholic Christians, it was unfamiliar to me before entering the Church and hasn't yet become a regular part of my devotional life; although I am glad for the opportunity to pray it on occasion with others.) Praying with a recording, to keep me focused while ironing, I began.

There was an immediate sense of disappointment: Mondays are the "Joyful Mysteries" and that just didn't seem to fit, still I continued with the creed and eventually the first Joyful Mystery began, "The Annunciation." The immediate scene that came to mind was a page from one of my children's early Christmas picture books of the angel Gabriel visiting Mary in a simple, undecorated room. My thoughts went to my parent's home where every room reflects my mother's touch. Returning to Mary's response, "May it be done to me according to your word," reminded me of the detachment, the loose grasp, of plans and places that such a "Yes" to God's call challenges us toward. "Are there areas where God invites me to cling less tightly?" Without time to linger longer on such meditation, the decade drew to a close and the next mystery began.

"The Visitation"...by now I had entered into the prayer and jumped right in, "Mary, thank you for visiting Elizabeth. My mom's name is Betty, perhaps you could join my prayers that my mother not feel alone, that she know the presence of Christ, and have confidence in the company of that "great cloud of witnesses," those saints whose lives we celebrated just yesterday; may she always know she is not alone." Remembering my kid's patron saints, especially St. Lucy, and "Luc" for light... "May she never know the dark of despair." Then, remembering Mary's example, "Lord, please help me to know when I need to get back for a return visit to Florida to see my mom and family."

The third Joyful Mystery began, "The Nativity, in a small, cold stable Jesus was born..." Well, to be honest my mind's eye usually sees a warm, fire-lit stable, but upon hearing "small, cold ..." I added hospital room, and I knew that there too Jesus is welcome, and indeed made present, in the firm hope strengthening our hearts, in the faithfulness of my father holding his wife's hand while watching her oxygen levels and praying at her bedside, and in the many small kindnesses shown by visitors and medical staff.

The fourth Joyful Mystery, “The Presentation,” brought an image not of Mary bringing Jesus “to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, just as it is written in the law of the Lord;” rather, my memory replayed a different ritual: the beautiful final commendation and “Salve Regina” being sung, during a recent funeral mass - a time of separation, coupled with the hope of eternal life. I thought of the words of Simeon to Mary, and knew that the Joyful Mysteries didn’t forget the subtleties of pain in the midst of the confidence of God’s faithfulness, and fulfillment of His promises.

“Finding Jesus in the Temple,” the final Joyful mystery began. What a trial it must have been for Mary and Joseph, not knowing where their son was, and what would happen to him, as they walked the road back to Jerusalem, followed by the joy of finding Jesus in his “Father’s house.” We had been on a painfully long journey, walking down a long corridor to a hospital room, waiting, anxious, and looking forward to the joy of bringing my mom back home. The Rosary was coming to a close. The Holy Spirit had entered into the place where the Mysteries intersected with the concerns of my heart and in that point of need strengthened my hope and encouraged my spirit.

As it turned out, the next day was the day to return to Florida, walk down the long corridor, into a small ICU room, and together with my dad, brother, and sister, let go, as my mom left with confident hope for an eternal destiny in Our Father’s house.

This is shared because perhaps there may be some comfort for someone else, even as I find comfort in remembering the meditation and prayer during that morning of ironing. But more, perhaps it may be an invitation to enter into the treasury of some of the prayers and devotions of our faith, including the Rosary, that are both traditional and timeless and can be the opportunity for a means of grace at your point of need, and beyond, to the needs of the whole world.

*Blessings,*



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