

Dad's Thoughts on Our Blessed Mother

By Mark Hirsch

All my life I have had a special place for our Lady in my heart. I don't know why but she has always been my favorite saint. Occasionally I would hear someone say that they had a special appreciation for some other saint and I could never understand how they could choose any one other than our Lady.

Way back in the second or the third grade I took a special liking to a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary that was in the basement chapel of Holy Rosary Church in my hometown of Medford, Wisconsin. That chapel was only used in the winter time. The lower grades always sat on the right side of the chapel and this statue was in full view from that side even though it was placed on the left side of the altar. I could see her clearly standing there with her mantle and both arms extended. I would just sit there and imagine how it would feel if she would just wrap her arms around me and hold me close. What a special joy.

Along with all this, my favorite color has always been blue – “Blessed Virgin blue” – and it still is. I mention this, because sometime around the fifth grade, our priest had the very top of the sanctuary painted a beautiful blue and when we came to Mass on the following Sunday I was totally distracted. I just loved that blue ceiling.

For a long time I felt very close to our Lady and would spend time just thinking of her. Then one day I had an experience that I didn't know how to handle. In the midst of those happy thoughts I got a feeling that our Lady wanted to appear to me. That was just too much for me at the time. This actually made me afraid to get that close again. I have often been sorry that I responded this way and I often share these thoughts with our Lady. Nevertheless, that was the day that I laid aside the dreams of a child and began to develop a prayer life.

The nuns at Holy Rosary School did everything they could to encourage the rosary and my mother did her share too. I remember there were times when Margriete and Eileen and I would pray the rosary on the way home from school.

On the other hand it is easy to fall away, and once we begin to slip it becomes very easy to go that way too. Mother would always send us to confession on the day before first Friday. One time in the middle of summer vacation I came out of the confessional with a decade of the rosary to say and I couldn't remember the Hail Mary. As luck would have it some young girl close to me was doing her penance and she prayed loud enough to get me back on track.

On a higher note, the year my mother broke her ankle I stopped at the hospital one day on my way home from school. She wanted to say the litany of the Blessed Virgin and neither of us had a book. She got us started, and much to our surprise when she reached the end of her memory, I was able to fill in and see us through to the end. That was during a time when her litany was an important part of my prayer life.

Some how Jesus and His Mother saw me through all of those growing up years and when my dear wife and I were going together we formed the habit of saying the rosary together on a date. After our marriage we made a real effort to keep the rosary alive in our home. Sometimes good and sometimes not so good.

By example, my mother taught me the importance of daily Mass. From the time that I got into the insurance business until this very day mother and I have tried to impress that idea on to our children as well. It takes a lot of patience.

Going back to our time in Stetsonville for a moment to the place we lived when all of our children were born—Way back when just mother and I moved on to the place, one day while working around the yard the thought came to me that a family should have a prayer they can call their own. I began with a thought of my favorite saint: *“Immaculate Heart of Mary”*. The words kept coming: *“We consecrate our family to you this day”*. Then with a look at the present and to the future: *“All that we are and all that we hope to be”*. Then the offering: *“Take us, dear Mother, and keep us, guide and protect us”*. Then the prayer: *“Teach us to come to you, teach us to love you”*. And why? *“That through you we may better know your Divine Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen”*.

Love Dad

OUR FAMILY PRAYER

**Immaculate Heart of Mary,
we consecrate our family to you this day,
all that we are and all that we hope to be.
Take us, dear Mother, keep us,
guide and protect us.
Teach us to come to you.
Teach us to love you,
that through you we may better know
your Divine Son Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**