



## WEEKLY LETTER FROM MONSIGNOR KEN

I pray the rosary every day, as many of you do. However, I have to admit that this was not always the case. This is my rosary story.

As a young boy, I remember praying the rosary, mostly in Lent. I prayed it out of a sense of religious devotion. Of course, as a kid, I didn't fully understand the meaning and power of the rosary. While not praying it every day, it was still part of my spiritual practice. Through grammar and high school, I pondered becoming a priest, and after some discernment, entered major seminary after college. The year was 1975, and the Church was still struggling with, even suffering with, confusion in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. The problem was not with the Council, itself, but more with its implementation. One of the casualties of that was Mary and how she was treated in seminaries. There were big changes in the way to prepare young men to be priests and it was still a work in progress. There was a definite movement to downplay the role of Mary, and this included discouragement of Marian devotions. As a result, I didn't adopt the rosary as part of my prayer life. I am embarrassed to admit that as a seminarian in a parish, one day I was asked to do a wake service for a funeral. There is Liturgy for wakes with a Liturgy of the Word. However, I was asked to pray the rosary. Oops! I wasn't sure how to say it! I knew the basics, but wasn't confident in the ritual, the mysteries and other prayers. I was a casualty of that era. Fast forward to my first parish as a priest. I still wasn't praying the rosary regularly. Since we were responsible for the spiritual care of the local hospital, I did then, as I still do, place the stock for the Oil of Sick in my pocket every day. I didn't know it, but placing the holy oil stock in my pocket gradually wore a hole. Well, one day I had a burial at a local cemetery. Guess what?

That night as I emptied my pockets, no holy oil! I was devastated and quite upset. I did a quick search of my room with no luck. Where was it? What did I do with it? I was desperate and too embarrassed to tell anyone. All I could do was pray. I was inspired to go back to the cemetery where I had the burial. To my absolute delight and surprise, there it was on the ground near the plot where I had the committal! Obviously, it had fallen through the hole in my pocket. I was so grateful. I decided, prompted by the Holy Spirit, both in gratitude and in reparation for losing it, to pray the rosary every day—for a month. Again, prompted by the Holy Spirit, when it came to end of the month, I heard that inner voice, "Why stop?" So, now I pray the rosary EVERY DAY!

With that, I began to grow in Marian spirituality, and realized what was missing from my formation. Devotion to Mary does NOT detract from faith in Jesus. It only makes our faith in the Lord stronger. True devotion to Mary brings us closer to Jesus and completes our relationship. Simply put, love of Mary makes us better Catholics, and complete Christians.

I cringe when I think of this story, but I'm grateful it has a happy ending. I decided to share this with you for Mother's Day, to honor our Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary. This weekend, of course, we honor our earthly mothers, living and deceased. However, we also honor our spiritual Mother, Mother of us all and Mother of the Church. Happy Mother's Day!

***"When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple there whom He loved, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold, your son.' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother.'" (John 19:26-27a)***