



Boston Catholic Journal



NIHIL NISI IESUM

Dedicated to Mary, Mother of God

Salus Animarum Suprema Lex Esto (Canon Law 175)

The Salvation of Souls is the Supreme Law in the Church

Speed-Praying

How often we Pray ... with our Lips

Speed-praying — just “getting it done,” “getting it over with” ...

How often, sadly, we pray as though God, with a stern eye, were strictly counting the *exact number* and each syllable of our prayers — carefully noting (and marking in a debit against us) if we omitted *just one* of the prescribed number (“did I pray

ten, or was that eight!? ... I had better assume that it was eight, and pray two more, otherwise my prayer will be meaningless, or at least will not mean as much.” How *quickly* we try to reach to the prescribed number that will somehow fulfill what God or His Holy Mother *demand*s of us! It is as though we see Christ or Mary, arms folded impatiently, feet tapping the floor, waiting for us to finish, so that they can get on with other things (when it is really *we* who wish to get on with “other things.”) This is another way of saying that, often, as we pray, our lips move, our fingers pass over the beads, but our *hearts* are within neither.

We see this especially in praying the Holy Rosary.

Let us take one very, very, common example: *The Apostles Creed*:

“I-believe-in-God-the-Father-Almighty-Creator-of-Heaven-and-earth-and-in-Jesus Christ-His-only-Son-Our Lord-Who-was-conceived-by-the-Holy-Spirit-born-of the-Virgin-Mary-suffered-under-Pontius-Pilate-was-crucified-died-and-was-buried-He-descended-into-Hell-the-third-day-He-rose-again-from-the-dead-He-ascended-into-Heaven-and-sitteth-at-the-righ-hand-of-God-the-Father-almighty-from-thence-He-shall-come-to-judge-the-living-and-the-dead-I-believe-in-the-Holy-Spirit-the-holy-Catholic-Church-the-Communion-of-Saints-the-forgiveness-of-sins-the-resurrection-of-the-body-and-life-everlasting-Amen.”

All spoken as *one sentence as quickly as possible — to get through it*.

Worse still is the prayer to the very Mother of God, Mary Most Holy,

ESPECIALLY as it is “recited” — rather than “prayed” in that beautiful prayer called the *Angelic Salutation*, but better known simply as the *Hail Mary*:

“HailMaryfullofgracetheLordiswiththeeblessedarththouamongstwomen
andblessedisthefruitofthywombJesusHolyMaryMotherofGodprayforus
sinnersnowandatthehourofoudeathAmen.”

Within 14 seconds flat! ... and ten times between each sacred Mystery!

Really?

Is that how you approach God in prayer? *As fast as humanly possible?*

Is that how you speak to your wife, your husband, your children — your friends and neighbors? If so, you either have none, and you never will!

“HelloJohnhowareyoulongtimenoseebythewayhowisLydiaIamwellwillyou
beabletocometomyson’sschoolplayOandIamsorrythatyourdogissickI
hopehegetsbetterItwasnicetalkkingtoyoubye.”

I am not an expert in Mariology — but I *am* human, as Mary was and is — and even with so few credentials I cannot imagine that either God or Mary are especially impressed with my piety or devotion when I speak to them, pray to them, much like a 33-rpm record incorrectly played at either 45-rpm or 78-rpm.

Try it:



click

Playing Praying at the Wrong Speed

*The point of this short essay is simply this: **God** is a **Person** — and so is Mary. I do not believe that they esteem you more holy or are in the least impressed with the speed of your prayers, or the number of your prayers-recited-as-in-a marathon. In fact, Christ Himself warned us against this:*

“And when you are praying, speak not much, as the heathens. For they think that in their much speaking they may be heard. Be not you therefore like to them, for your Father knows what is needful for you, before you ask Him.” (Saint Matthew 6.7-8)

Is this *not* to derogate from formal and structured prayers such as the Holy Rosary or the litanies of the Saints? By no means! Nor is it written to diminish the piety of the one praying. No. No. No!

In speaking of repetitive forms of prayer — we must be clear that “repetitive” is *not to be understood pejoratively*. *Repetitive prayer is found in Sacred Scripture:*

- In the Book of the Apocalypse (the last book in the Bible) we learn of the Holy Angels: “And they rested not day and night, saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come.”
(Apocalypse 4.8)
- “And they cried one to another, and said: Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is full of his glory.” (Isaiah 6.3)
- The prayerful utterance, “His mercy endures forever” *occurs no less than 27 times in just one Psalm alone!!!* (Psalm 135)
<https://drbo.org/chapter/21135.htm>

This could also be said of the Most Holy Rosary, the Trisagion* prayed in both Latin and Eastern Rite Catholic Churches, as well as many Novenas.

It could arguably be said that repeatedly telling another “I love you!” is mere repetition (it is *not!*)

This is the point: when you “pray” do not make your prayer a rote “recitation” to be sped through as quickly as possible. Repetition is meaningful — or it can be useless.

Dwell on the words you pray. Utter them in the same way as you would when sincerely talking to *any* person before you.

In fact, you *are!* You are speaking to God Most High — from your heart.

One single decade of one single Mystery of the Holy Rosary prayed to Mary, and

through Mary, to the **Person of God** — *ex corde* (from the heart) in the recognition that *you are addressing a real Person who is listening to you* — exceeds all the decades of all the Rosaries recited since Mary brought this devotion to Saint Dominic in the 13th century.

The beautiful complexities latent within the Holy Rosary are many. Meditating upon a holy Mystery while simultaneously praying the Hail Mary as more than simply words accompanying our meditation is no small feat. It is — dare I say — grace; the grace of simultaneity that proximates what we glimpse of eternity.

Simply because the prayers may be many and identical does not preclude their being uttered in absolute devotion each time... for they extend beyond time to eternity ... and are offered in union with Mary to God Who sees the hearts and knows the thoughts of men.

Understand that distraction in prayer is very, very, common. No saint has not contended with it. It only becomes a problem when we become *obsessed with the distraction* to the point that we despair of praying meaningfully — and cease praying. Then, as the saying goes, the “remedy” is far worse than the “cure.” Better to be seeking God amid distraction than forsaking Him without all the distractions of the world.

One simple suggestion, I think, is this: Pray — but only as *sincerely* as you talk!

***Trisagion:**

“Holy God, Holy [and] Mighty, Holy [and] Immortal, have mercy on us.

Holy God, Holy [and] Mighty, Holy [and] Immortal, Have mercy on us.

Holy God, Holy [and] Mighty, Holy [and] Immortal, Have mercy on us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us.

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy, and Immortal, Have mercy on us.”

Geoffrey K. Mondello

Editor

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