

**No.23.**

**4th March 2021**

Dear Friends,

This week Fr Ronald Rolheiser speaks about the importance of ritual and repetitive habits - good habits - in our prayer life. We don't always have to chase after novelty. Indeed, ritual and regular commitment can be crucial in helping us persevere - even when our minds and moods wander.

I have included, secondly, a short piece on the Rosary - a popular prayer in Catholicism, but not found easy by all by any means. Later on is a talk by Bishop Barron on praying the rosary - with some lovely works of art to help us concentrate. This you tube can be followed for successive mysteries of the Rosary - you are not expected to attempt them all in one go! Only keep on with this if you find it helpful.

Bishop Barron's Sunday Sermon is a very challenging one this week - taking his theme from the reading from Genesis we heard on the 2nd Sunday of Lent - all about the near-sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. The Bishop calls it an awful story - what sense are we to make of it?

Take care and God bless,

John de Waal.

**The Sustaining Power of Ritual**

**by Ronald Rolheiser.**

A recent study on marriage points out that couples who make it a habit to give each other a ritual embrace or kiss before leaving the house in the morning and another ritual embrace or kiss before retiring at night fare better than those who let this gesture be determined by simple spontaneity or mood. The study makes the point that even if the ritual kiss is done in a distanced, hurried, perfunctory, or duty-bound way, it still serves a very important function; namely, it speaks of fidelity and commitment beyond the ups and downs of our emotions, distractions, and tiredness on a given day. It is a ritual, an act that is done regularly, precisely to say what our heads and hearts cannot always say, namely that the deepest part of us remains committed, even during those times when we are too tired or self-preoccupied to be as attentive and present as we should be. It says we still love the other and remain committed despite inevitable changes and pressures the seasons bring.

This is often not understood today. An over-idealization of love, family, Church, and prayer often crucifies the reality. Popular culture would have us believe that love should be romantic, exciting and interesting all the time, and that lack of felt emotion is a signal that something is wrong. Liturgists and prayer leaders would have us believe that every church service needs to be full of enthusiasm and emotion and that there is something wrong with us when we find ourselves flat, bored or looking at our wristwatches, and resisting emotional engagement during church or prayer. Everywhere we are warned about the dangers of doing something simply because it is a duty, that there is something wrong when the movements of love, prayer, or service become routine. Why do something if your heart isn't in it?

Again, there is something legitimate in these warnings : duty and commitment without heart will ultimately not sustain themselves. But with that being admitted, it is important to recognize and name the fact that any relationship in love, family, church or prayer can sustain itself over a long period of time only through ritual and routine. Ritual sustains the heart, not vice versa.

The same holds true for prayer. Anyone who prays only when she can affectively bring along her heart and soul will not sustain prayer for long. But the habit of prayer, the ritual, simple fidelity to the act, showing up to do it irrespective of feelings and mood, can sustain prayer for a lifetime and rein in the roaming of head and heart.

(From : "Prayer : Our Deepest Longing, by Ronald Rolheiser).

## **The Rosary.** by Fr John C. Edwards SJ.

The best reason for saying the rosary is that it is a way of penetrating prayerfully events of Our Lord's life and aspects of the glorious life in heaven. An

affective way for us to do this must obviously be something that Our Lord wants us to know about and use. Perhaps this is why Our Lady is so anxious for it (implicitly she asked for it at Lourdes - and quite explicitly at Fatima); she must be glad when we do something which will lead us to her Son.

Legend links the Rosary's origin with St Dominic in 13th century, and Dominicans have certainly been its most foremost champions. Historically it grew with the desire for the Laity to have 150 prayers (ie. the Hail Mary) to link them with the 150 psalms used in monastic prayer (although in recent years 50 more have been added by Pope John Paul !). There was a long and intricate evolution which ended in the 16th century with the rosary as we have it.

If you are beginning to say the rosary for the first time you would do well to 'train' yourself by taking a mystery a day, preceded by a relevant part of scripture for fifteen days. After that you should know the mysteries and could continue with five mysteries a day.

## **Bishop Robert Barron's Sunday Sermon.**

This Sunday Sermon covers the first reading from the Second Sunday of Lent :  
The Book of Genesis 22 : 1-2, 9-13, 15-18.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-kQ2w97eN4>

You may also like the following on praying the Rosary :

Join Bishop Robert Barron in exploring the meditative depth, rhythmic beauty, and spiritual power of the Rosary at <https://rosary.wordonfire.org>.

**Final Prayer** - taken from Compline (the Night Prayer of the Church).

**Antiphon.** Save us, Lord, while we are awake; protect us while we sleep; that we may keep watch with Christ and rest with him in peace.

**Nunc Dimittis.**

At last, all-powerful Master,  
you give leave to your servant  
to go in peace, according to your promise.

For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared for all nations, the  
light to enlighten the Gentiles  
and give glory to Israel, your people.

**Antiphon.** Save us, Lord, while we are awake; protect us while we sleep; that we  
may keep watch with Christ and rest with him in peace.

A short time for silent prayer.

### **Concluding prayer.**

Lord our God,  
restore us again by the repose of sleep after the fatigue of our daily work;  
so that, continually renewed by your help, we may serve you in body and soul.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen

**Blessing.** Lord, grant us a quiet night and a perfect end. Amen.

### **A final thought.**

“Never travel with anyone who expects you to be interesting all the time. On a long  
trip, there are bound to be some boring patches.”