

Heart of the World XLVII

“Like the heart in the body, the very center and life-moving force of the Church is the Eucharist. All of the other Sacraments and the whole life of Grace and the Church in the world flow from it and lead back to it.”

There is nothing that Our Lady does better than to lead us to her Son. It is her very *raison d'être* and her greatest joy. Soon, (in four weeks!) we will be in Advent and a new Church year. Over this past year we have celebrated the centenary of our Blessed Mother's apparitions at Fatima and in this column have considered what that can mean to us today.

The primary way that Mary directs us to her Son is through the Sacraments. In every authentic apparition from the most ancient to current and on-going sites like Medjugorje, she constantly exhorts us to avail ourselves of His Mercy and Love. Specifically she has encouraged increased and frequent practice of Confession. Besides regular attendance at Mass on Sunday's and Holy Days, she has also emphasized some time of Eucharistic Adoration—preferably at least weekly.

In fact, at Medjugorje, she has given a beautiful and simple template for holiness. Drawing on the biblical account of David and Goliath (see 1Sam 17), she has compared our attempt to live authentically Christian lives in this secularized society as a similarly mismatched fight. However, just as David went out to meet Goliath in battle completely trusting that the fight is the Lord's, Mary gives us five stones to use: Prayer, Fasting, Mass, reading/praying with the Bible, and Confession. Let us look at this very practical advice as we conclude this Church year of 2017.

Prayer is nothing other than communication with the living God. It can and does take many forms. Essentially, prayer can be mental (internal/thoughts) or verbal (words, usually out loud).

Examples of verbal prayers are the Our Father and Hail Mary. They can be combined with other prayers in a 'routine' like with the Rosary or Chaplets or Litanies, etc. Liturgical (and communal) prayers like the Liturgy of the Hours and the Mass are also primarily verbal.

Mental prayer is more of a pondering in thought. One important form of mental prayer is referred to as discursive meditation. That's a fancy term to describe an interior conversation with God about something. Imagine you are at a museum and appreciating a master work. You strike up a conversation with someone next to you doing the same thing, and find out that it's the artist. It is a personal conversation, but it is mediated through the piece of art. This is basically what discursive meditation is and it opens the door to a very deep relationship.

So, pick up this stone of prayer. Can you commit at least 10 minutes a day to just talking to the Lord? Truly, it doesn't take much, but the benefit is surprising.

Fr. Michael