

Homily: Mary, Our Model of Prayer

When I was 14, I read a book on Mary that changed my life. I began praying the Rosary more often. Then came October.

I had already considered the idea of becoming a priest before, but I had firmly rejected it. I didn't know what else I would do with my life, but I remember telling myself: *anything but that*. That's where I was when October 2009 began.

That month, as a school, we prayed the full five decades of the Rosary every day. And during that month, dedicated to the rosary, something strange happened — hard to describe even now, but by the end of October I was convinced that God was calling me to the priesthood.

Every October since then reminds me of that October in 2009.

Mary is Part of Our Relationship with God

Over the last weeks we've been looking at prayer as a relationship with God. Today, on this first Sunday of October, I

want to say something about how Mary is part of that relationship too.

She is the Mother given to us by Christ Himself. At the foot of the Cross, Jesus said to the beloved disciple John: "*Behold your mother.*" From that moment, Mary became the spiritual mother of all disciples. Also, since we are the adopted brothers and sisters of Jesus, then Mary — His mother — is our mother as well.

Sometimes people struggle with that. They see her as distant, immaculate, almost too perfect. Yet the truth is the opposite: Mary shows us what it looks like to live close to God in the most ordinary and human way. She is the model of relationship with God. And if prayer is our relationship with God, then Mary is also our model of prayer.

Mary's Life of Prayer

Mary wasn't a nun hidden away in a convent. She was a wife, and then a mother, living an ordinary human life. And yet, from what the Gospels tell us, her whole life was filled with prayer.

- At the Annunciation, Mary listened. The angel brought God's word, and she was already in prayer when he came — tradition often shows her kneeling in her home, sometimes even on a kneeler. The image I sent with the newsletter this weekend shows the angel behind her. She's on her kneeler praying with the scriptures Infront of her and turns round to listen to him. Prayer begins in listening, making ourselves available, creating time and space for God to speak. And Mary's answer — *"Let it be done to me according to your word"* — is the essence of prayer: openness, trust, surrender. Every time we pray the Angelus, we echo that same response.
- At Cana, Mary interceded. She noticed the need — "They have no wine" — even when the couple themselves didn't realise it. That is prayer of intercession, noticing others' needs and bringing them to God. When I started secondary school, one of the first things they told us about prayer was: "You're away from your family now — pray for them, it's a way of keeping in touch." We can always pray for the needs of others, as Mary did.

- At the Cross, Mary was still there in prayer. Prayer is not just for the joyful times; it is also for the dark and difficult times. She remained faithful when others ran away. That shows us that true prayer involves perseverance, keeping our routine even when it is hard.

So, in every stage of her life, Mary models what prayer looks like.

My Own Discovery

When I was 14, I realised there was more to faith than just routine. Reading that book about Mary's love for us — the miracles she had done for others — I was blown away. I could pray to her because I knew she was there for me. If Mary loved me that much, I could only imagine how much Jesus loved me, and that's one thing that pushed me to pray the rosary a lot more.

That discovery was a turning point. My prayer life has grown and changed since then, but that was my first real leap forward — and it came through Mary.

The Rosary

That is why the Church especially encourages us in October to pray the Rosary. Someone once said that when they pray the Rosary, holding the beads feels like holding Mary's hand. I've often felt that too — even having the Rosary with me in the car, on the passenger seat, can be a comfort. And a saint said that the monotony of the rosary wipes away the monotony of our sins.

A Jubilee Legacy

This year of our Lord 2025 is a Jubilee Year. Jubilee in the Bible was always a time of renewal, a time when debts were cancelled, captives were freed, and land was restored. In other words, it was a year of fresh beginnings, of God's mercy breaking in. Even our civil jubilees leave their mark — think of the Queen's Jubilees, which gave us new buildings, parks, even the Elizabeth Line in London. They left something lasting. What legacy will this Jubilee Year leave us? I want to suggest one. We could become people more deeply rooted in the Rosary, more deeply close to Mary. That wouldn't be a bad legacy, it would outlast the year itself and shapes us for years to come. Just as my own October of 2009 left

a permanent mark on my life, so this Jubilee could be the moment that marks our parish with a deeper Marian devotion.

Practical Invitation

So what does this mean for us this week?

- Pray the Rosary — even one decade a day.
- Speak to Mary personally — as you would to a mother. Share your joys, your struggles, your hopes.
- Keep an image of Mary at home — as a reminder that she prays with us and for us.
- And of course, remember that she's the model of prayer. If you try to pray like Mary did, then you're doing it well.

Conclusion

Mary is our Mother, given to us by Christ. She is the model of prayer and of relationship with God. If we take her hand in prayer, she will always lead us more surely to her Son.