

## Fruits of family prayers seen in children



MANILA, Jan. 5, 2012 – Though praying as a family normally involves at least one parent and the children, and sometimes with elderly relatives such as grandparents joining in, some little ones can easily carry out the practice even in the absence of the senior family members as long as the habit has been instilled in them.

One summer had a brood of three little girls spending a good part of their days away from games, television and the usual fare during vacations.

Nicole Bautista and her two sisters were urged by their mom to pray the rosary together every day since they didn't have any scheduled summer activities.

“We prayed the Joyful mysteries in the morning, the Sorrowful ones at noon, and the Glorious ones in the evening,” Bautista recalled with fondness.

“I don't remember why we did it that way. Perhaps it's so each of us could lead a whole rosary... I don't really know anymore. That's how I memorized all the prayers of the rosary.”

In Pope Benedict's last General Audience of 2011 – December 28 – his catechesis contained reminders that “families should be schools of prayer,” taking their cue from the Holy Family at Nazareth. According to a report on the Vatican news website, the Pope also said it is important that “parents provide an example of prayerful meditation to their children just like Mary and Joseph did.”

### Carrying on family traditions

While Bautista's parents took no part in the young brood's thrice-daily rosary, they apparently carried out what the Holy Father referred to as the parents' role. According to the 28-year-old writer, her family carried on the tradition of praying the rosary together on trips back home to Manila from Cavite – taken almost weekly – for many years while growing up.

Sunday mass together was also ingrained in the family, and “when we were little, my mom and dad

used to bring us to weekday masses before bringing us to school and going to work. I don't remember that they explained the mass to us. It was just part of the routine for us kids," Bautista said.

These positive memories have helped her look forward to establishing a similar practice someday when it would be her turn to lead her future spouse and children in their life of faith.

"Someday when I have my own family, I want to set a tradition of praying the rosary together every night. I want to bring them closer to Our Lady. It's a prayer that helps you appreciate important scenes in Christ's life," she explained.

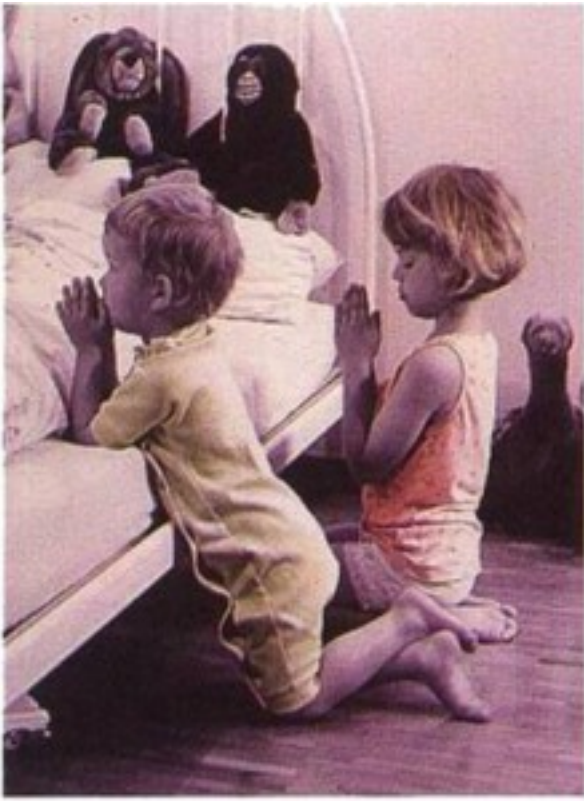
"When I was little I had this children's booklet on the rosary, and every mystery was illustrated in a cute style—I think that's one way helping a child imagine what happened in the mystery."



### **Family prayers hardly done**

For other people, helping the kids appreciate the Faith and develop a prayer life came even without the habit of family prayer ingrained in them. Debbie Nakpil Rodrigo pointed out that there were no traditions of praying together as far as her family was concerned "except for the rare occasions when the image of the Blessed Mother would be at our house for the block rosary. My mom would then make us pray the rosary at 6pm – at least those she could gather who were at home – for the whole time that it would be there," she recalled.

Rodrigo grew up in a rather "un-religious" household, she said, where grace before meals, bedtime and morning prayers, and taking part in traditional Lenten practices were not done. The central part of Christian life — Sunday mass – was the one thing her parents made sure was not missed.



**Adapting prayers to the little ones**

In spite of the absence of established routines during childhood when it came to praying as a family, Rodrigo – now a mother of five boys – has set her own faith traditions together with husband Francis and the brood.

The principles of Liturgical Bible Study have become invaluable in her family, and she has adapted these to her sons, ages ranging from 5-11 years.

“We read the coming Sunday’s gospel, go into details of that reading, before moving onto the First and Second Readings. At the end, we come up with a single ‘thread’ which ties up the three readings,” Rodrigo explained.

“We were very surprised that even at their varying ages they are able to understand, analyze, and relate to the readings,” she added.

Living an authentic Christian life – of which prayer is a part – is important to both Debbie and Francis, but the husband mentioned that his growing up years didn’t involve family prayer, “just occasional rosaries, which he hated because his mother would make them pray it on their knees!” Debbie said, now amused by the thought.

Bautista herself hardly anticipated the daily prayers of that one summer of thrice-daily rosaries, yet on hindsight sees the lessons such experiences taught her.

“I remember that we said the rosary at a specific hour every time. When it would be almost time to pray, you feel like you don’t want to go... but you still go anyway because it’s time. It’s like not wanting to do your homework, but you have to go do it anyway,” she mused.

“And after you pray you feel so good that you did it. That was just one summer when we were kids.”

### **The fruits of praying as a family**

Rodrigo is hopeful that the efforts she and her husband are making in integrating common prayer into family life will engrave a genuine faith in her little boys’ hearts.

“A relationship with God is the most important thing we can teach our children, and we both hope that boys, being boys, will not rebel against the little lessons we teach them,” she enthused.

“More than that, we hope that our actions in daily life will serve as the good examples that they someday look back on as the inspiration for their own personal spirituality.”

“I remember once when I called up my friend at night and I was told to call back because their family was praying the rosary. The rosary brings the family together — it’s really family time. It’s a drop-everything-for-this kind of thing, and if every member of a family had at least one Drop Everything activity that they do together, then that makes them closer; they share a bond,” Bautista explained.

“Of course, praying together also is an opportunity to teach little ones that there is always Someone who is watching over them, and there is always someone who is praying for them. It doesn’t have to be the rosary at family prayer time; it can be as simple as talking to God and asking Him to bless the Pope, or to help a sick grandparent, or to guide somebody who will take a test the next day. And whether or not the prayers are answered soon, it’s one way to help kids understand that things happen because of prayer.” (CBCP for Life)

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