

# THE IMMACULATA



## *Just Pray & Get Out of The Way* by Anne Kootz

How often I am my own worst enemy!

A cradle Catholic, I never left the Church. I always thought myself among the most devout and dedicated. Oddly enough, I did not insist on this quality when I met and married my husband, Buddy. Brought up as a Methodist, now he was essentially agnostic....and my temperamental opposite, though I didn't see that yet. A very good man in every respect except this area of religion.

Most of my extended family married Protestants of one stripe or another. All converted to the True Faith within a couple of years. Buddy already courteously attended Mass with me; surely he will convert in short order. I believed, when I thought about it at all, this problem would be easy to fix.

Those of you in 'mature' marriages are chuckling. Little details, insignificant in the glow of romance, glare in day to day married life. High expectations soon submit to dull reality. I advised Buddy of his need for religious growth. But what began as warm, loving suggestions gradually became shrill. Five years later I was at my wit's end. This had become the greatest handicap to my domestic bliss. Completely out of patience, I shook my fist at Our Lord (forgive me!) and shouted – OK. I've done ALL I can. This is NOT my problem anymore. It is YOURS!

Notice it was my issue, not Buddy's. As I struggled at this time, I did read a helpful book on temperaments. It was an eye-opener. So Buddy really wasn't trying to make me crazy? God made him that way! Our personality conflicts – choleric wife and phlegmatic husband – became more acceptable. However, the disconnect in our spiritual lives did not mend. Not that this was the

only trouble.

Months and then years passed. No children. Nine failed attempts to adopt. At the nine year point, with both the spiritual and fertility issues unresolved, I needed a diversion – a challenging occupational interest. I began the process to enroll in Optometry school.

Of course! Hearing me resolved to accept His Will in this as in all things, suddenly Our Lord stepped in. On our return from a Christmas holiday a phone message greeted us. Our 10<sup>th</sup> attempt had succeeded in the adoption of our first son. Our 2<sup>nd</sup> son was underway within two days. Go ahead – no one laughed louder than Buddy!

Our family life became intense. There was no time to pine about our spiritual disagreements – babies to feed, toddlers to corral, and children to prepare for First Communion. Nonetheless, our common adversary was not idle. At 16 years a new, very painful threat to our marriage emerged.

In agony, I pleaded with Our Lord. In response, a still, small voice whispered, 'You say you are such a good Catholic. Have you been praying for your husband?' Oh — my! Immediately I started a daily rosary, for 'whatever Buddy needs.'

At precisely the 90 day point in my desperation-novena, Buddy returned from a long, work-related trip. He invited me out for a drink. Understand, we never went 'out for a drink.' I could hear it coming... "I want a divorce." With nothing left to lose, I got a sitter and joined him at a nearby bar for a cocktail.

Continued on back page...

## *To an Altar Boy*

by St John Berchams

To be Christ's page at the altar,  
To serve Him freely there,  
Where even the Angels falter,  
Bowed low in reverent prayer.

To touch the throne most holy,  
To hand the gifts for the feast,  
To see Him meekly, lowly,  
Descend at the word of the priest.

To hear man's poor petition,  
To sound the silver bell,  
When He in sweet submission,  
Comes down with us to dwell.

No grander mission surely  
Could Saints or men enjoy;  
No heart should love more purely  
Than yours, my altar boy.

God bless you, lad, forever,  
And keep you in His care,  
And guard you that you never  
Belie the robes you wear.

For white bespeaks untainted  
A heart both tried and true;  
And red tells love the sainted  
And holy martyrs knew.

Throughout life, then, endeavor  
God's graces to employ;  
And be in heart forever  
A holy altar boy.



**Our Lady is our Mother and our friend.  
She is the empress of the universe and  
loves us more than all the mothers and  
queens of the world have ever loved  
any one human being.**

**St Louis de Montfort,  
The Secret of the Rosary**

### **Just Pray & Get Out of the Way Continued...**

You guessed it. "I've decided to join the Catholic Church." A pause to pick my jaw up off the floor! Our Lady had interceded so completely – beyond my wildest imagination! As he related the process, during that long trip he had decided to quietly "try on the decision, like a shoe you wanted to buy. Then if I didn't like it..." So like him to be ultra cautious! But Our Lady had the last laugh. Once he had 'tried it on,' it stuck!

Buddy was received into the church about a year later. He remains steady, if not overtly, devout. On occasion he

relates a funny exchange with co-workers in which he defends the Church. He quietly endures his extended family's preferred misinterpretation ... "well, Anne is so outspoken, he finally gave in." Sadly, never has his parents or siblings or in-laws offered him an opportunity to explain himself. It is our little secret.

Meanwhile, our 4<sup>th</sup>, and evidently final son, Peter was born, named in honour of our family's safety in the Barque of Peter. But even here I am still wary of my own worst enemy.

## What is Worthwhile now? By Fr Lasance

It is always worth while doing the good that just at this moment lies within my power to do.

St. Francis de Sales, when a student at the University of Paris, suffered long and cruelly from a horrible thought, that he was sure to be damned. At length he flung the temptation from him and conquered it quite, in this way.

He said manfully: "Well, if I am not to see and love God for eternity, at least I will love him with all my heart this hour while I may."

It is worth while now for me, – now while the brief occasion lasts – to overcome one temptation, to do one small kindness, to improve my mind by one half hour of study, to wait in patience when there is nothing else to be done, to bear a headache, or sleeplessness, or some small pain.

Life cannot be filled with great deeds, nor deeds of manifest profit and advantage to oneself and mankind.

There must be margins and leavings in the web of human existence: there must be pieces over, the use of which is not apparent; and these leavings, as they seem void of good, are readily turned to evil use.

We shall find, if we think, that many of our sins are committed in these loose and unoccupied times; whereas our hours of active and successful work, or keen sport and play, are usually innocent.

The author of the "Imitation of Christ" has a chapter "that we must apply ourselves to humble works when we are not up to our best."

We must be content at certain times to do anything that is innocent and lawful; and console ourselves with the reflection that all lawful works are works of grace in him who is in the state of grace.

On the other hand, I must be jealous of the hours in which my faculties are bright and available for work. Even in my worldly interest I must be jealous of them.

Those are precious hours.

Keep your eyes fixed upon your heavenly home, upon the long, long, everlasting vacation, upon the eternal rest of the just.



## Reflections on the Family Rosary by Maura Koulik

This article is reproduced with kind permission of Maura Koulik, who compiled and edited the book *The Art of Catholic Mothering, a wonderful book for Catholic Mothers which consists of stories from twelve Catholic mothers who speak about motherhood, child rearing and the Faith. Available at [stritabooks.com](http://stritabooks.com)*

*This mother was married at the age of nineteen. She became a Catholic at age thirty, after eleven years of marriage. Her husband converted to Catholicism twenty-four years later. She has six children, fourteen grandchildren. One of her daughters is a Dominican Nun.*

For almost twenty years we have said the family rosary, first with our children and now with our grandchildren. This wonderful practice was not part of my heritage-I converted at the age of thirty-and so it was a practice undertaken without convictions fostered by fruitful experience or observation but only out of obedience to Our Lady of Fatima's request that families pray together, daily, the holy rosary.

During these years, the reality of our family at prayer has been far different from the traditional, beautiful, calm portrayal of the family gathered together to say the rosary. You know the picture I mean. Dad in his suit and tie, kneeling upright in front of the statue of Our Lady, the picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on the mantel over the fireplace, all the family reverently joining in, each one equally well dressed and upright, except for grandmother or mother who is sitting in the rocking chair with the baby snuggled quietly on her lap.

**The teenager complains, "I always say the rosary. I can't today cuz I gotta go." Mom, with monumental self-control says, "Going must wait! Our Heavenly Mother asked us to pray our rosary together!"**

The contrast between our family rosary and this serene scene used to make me ask myself, *What have I done wrong? Where have I failed?* Our rosary prayer time went more or less

like this: Mom calls, "Rosary time! Time for the rosary!"

The eight-year-old quickly runs next door. *I'll be right back.*

The family gathers and waits impatiently.

The teenager complains, "I always say the rosary. I can't today cuz I gotta go."

Mom, with monumental self-control says, "Going must wait! Our Heavenly Mother asked us to pray our rosary together!"

The eight-year-old returns and the rosary begins.

However, in varying degrees on any one day, the following interruptions take place: The doorbell rings. A visitor is invited to join us or is quickly dismissed. The baby spits up, or worse, and has to be tended. The two-year-old pitches a tantrum and has to be disciplined. The phone rings. It's long distance. The eight and ten-year-olds argue over their places in the room, shoving one another back and forth, each claiming the other has usurped his seat, until they are separated. The fifteen-year-old, who is dying to play nine in-

nings of baseball followed by a quick game of basketball, is overcome by inexplicable weakness, which necessitates his slouching, then lying, on the sofa. This necessitates my poking him until he overcomes this mysterious ailment and we can get on with our prayers.

I recall one family event when sixty or so guests courageously gathered together (it does take a certain kind of courage to call the teenagers from play to pray) in the hot, stuffy living room for the rosary. The windows were open, the babies were quiet, and so the devil invited the neighbour's dog to come sit outside the window and howl for the next twenty minutes! *Oh, help dear Mother. This is praying the holy rosary, meditating on the mysteries of Our Lord's life as you asked? It seems that it is the best we can do. I am sorry!*

Now I see the picture of our family rosary time from a long-term, cumulative perspective. The children are growing up, marrying and having families of their own. They have retained the true Faith through this tumultuous, error-ridden time in the church. One of them has chosen the religious life of a Dominican. The babies who sometimes needed their diapers changed mid-prayer are now teenagers, and they are still praying the rosary. Their faces continue to shine with the beauty of purity and innocence, even if there is a slightly rebellious cast at times.

I thank our dear Lord for the grace of the Faith. And I thank our Lady for the holy rosary. Seen one day at a time, the fruits of the family rosary are not always observable. We must simply forge ahead and persevere through all of life's distractions and interruptions. Now, from a grandmother's vantage, I see many families who do succeed in their practice of the true Faith. Almost without exception, these are families that pray the rosary. I have found the reverse to be true as well. Those families who, through the years and generations, have slipped farther away from the teachings of the Church, have either given up or never started praying the family rosary.

I learned that chaos at family prayer time is normal. It's life, and in life disruption is unavoidable. Just do the best you can and don't give up! Remember that the request to pray the family rosary did not originate with us-it comes from Heaven and our Heavenly Mother-and God blesses our good intentions. The family rosary is a family necessity. In spite of doorbells, dissensions, dogs and distractions, let us unite and stay united under Our Lady's protection as an army of families, all praying the Holy Rosary.

