

Homily for the Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary

**Mother of Perpetual Help Church
Maryville, Illinois**

October 7, 2025

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As your Bishop it is good to be with you to celebrate this Mass in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary.

In our first reading today, we continued to hear from the Book of the Prophet Jonah. The story of Jonah and the whale is one that many of us probably remember from Sunday school, or from the 2002 film “Jonah: A VeggieTales Movie.” And while the story of Jonah being swallowed by a whale is often a favorite of children, this story has a profound meaning that should not be overlooked. Jonah was a reluctant prophet who was called by God to deliver a challenging message to the wicked city of Nineveh. This message was that, unless the people of Nineveh repent, they would be destroyed for their wicked deeds. It is understandable that Jonah did not want to deliver this message for God. Informing others about their

wickedness is a task that requires much courage, especially when one suspects that the message will not be received with openness. While Jonah's initial fear is understandable, his decision to flee across the ocean to escape God was not the right way to deal with this. It took a giant storm, and being swallowed by a whale, to make Jonah change his mind. God was persistent that Jonah would be His chosen messenger.

After his second call from God, Jonah does deliver the message to the wicked Ninevites: "Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed!" Amazingly, the whole city repents in sackcloth and ashes. They believed in God and a fast from food and water was declared, even for the animals! Jonah's message of destruction led to a miraculous conversion of an entire city.

Where did Jonah go wrong as a prophet? Even though his message was ultimately successful, he lacked one key quality which any true prophet should have: prayer. As Jonah carried out his mission, we see hardly any evidence that Jonah turns to God in prayer. Instead of seeing himself as beloved by God, Jonah saw himself as the victim in God's plan. He could not see his mission through the eyes of God. When the storm first struck the boat which was carrying Jonah away from Nineveh, his fellow passengers began

to pray to their own pagan gods, and they had to wake up Jonah who was sleeping, and order him to pray to his God. What if Jonah had turned to God in prayer before, when he was tempted to flee? Perhaps Jonah would have experienced in his own heart the conversion to which he invited others.

The example of the prophet Jonah demonstrates the need for us to develop a deep personal relationship with God. Even though God's mission was still accomplished through Jonah, Jonah's life was one of disintegration, in which he spoke the external message of God while, interiorly, he was far from God. As baptized disciples of Christ, we are called to be prophets to carry God's message into the world. More than simply speaking God's words, we first need to receive God's heart.

In the Gospel today, we see Jesus visiting with his friends Martha and Mary, as Jesus so often did when he needed a place to rest. Martha was burdened with much serving, while Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, basking in his loving presence. Jesus does not condemn Martha's generosity in serving him, but he does praise Mary and say that she "has chosen the better part, and it will not be taken from her." Mary was learning to receive the heart of Jesus by listening at his feet.

Prayer is an essential part of our life as Catholics. Without prayer, we become anxious and worried about the many responsibilities that we carry as students, parents, and members of society. On this feast day of Our Lady of the Rosary, I would like to propose the Rosary as one of the most effective paths to conform our hearts to the heart of God. For centuries, the Rosary has been one of the most popular forms of devotional prayer in the Catholic Church, if not *the* most popular. There is good reason for this. The Holy Rosary is built on the foundation of Sacred Scripture, and the mysteries of the Rosary bring us through the primary events of Christ's life in the Gospels, through which we receive salvation. The Rosary has been prayed by poor peasants and by kings, by little children and by Doctors of the Church. Around fifteen minutes long, the Rosary is long enough to help us become recollected in prayer, but not too long that it might take us away from our duties.

Last Wednesday, Pope Leo XIV invited every Catholic around the world to pray the Rosary daily in October for the intention of peace in the world. I echo Pope Leo's invitation. It is not too late to start today. If you don't know how to pray the Rosary, I encourage you to ask your family and friends to teach you. The Rosary is a beautiful form of communal prayer.

Earlier this year, the *Journal of Religion and Health* published a peer-reviewed study about the effect of praying the Rosary on one's health. The study indicated a strong correlation between praying the Rosary and reduced levels of depression, increased levels of empathy, and higher levels of well-being.¹ This academic study simply confirms what we already know as Catholics: daily prayer leads us to greater trust in God and less worry about the future.

In this month of the Holy Rosary, may our Blessed Mother always lead us closer to her son, Jesus. May we pray every day for peace in the world and peace in our own hearts.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10943-025-02265-y>