

Langlois: No gamble trusting in Mary's intercession

Country singer Kenny Rogers died a couple months ago. I grew up in a household where his records were played often, at least in my younger years, and so it was not without some twinge of emotion that I followed the related headlines.

As the tributes poured in for him, snippets of his biggest hits were shared and re-shared, including these famous lines: "You've got to know when to hold 'em/ Know when to fold 'em/ Know when to walk away/ And know when to run."

Now, you may wonder what country music lyrics from "The Gambler" are doing in a Catholic post about Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Well, to my way of thinking, while these words may hold good advice for poker players, in them also lies a kernel of wisdom about how to make our way through the inevitably painful events that sometimes arise in our lives.

While COVID-19 entered the lives of billions of people all over our planet this year and took over nearly every news headline, a relatively smaller scale event happened in my own life: a valued relationship ended. And in the midst of a world that saw the onset of restrictions, self-isolating behaviour and the death of thousands from a highly contagious virus, I also grieved the loss of a friendship.

In many of the dilemmas that present themselves to us on our life's journey, it is often a struggle to know the best way to cope. Is it helpful to try to fix a situation or mend a relationship? Or do we need to recognize that some issues are too big for us to repair?

With the coronavirus, much of the world, including Canada, has taken the stance that we should battle this flu pandemic, that we should "hold 'em," and so we have seen measures put in place all over the country to do just that. And it seems to be working, thanks be to God, although not without the loss of many lives and jobs.

In my own situation, though, I faced the painful realization that the friendship could not be saved, and, after countless tears and much heartache, I had to learn to let go. I had to "fold 'em," so to speak.

Often in my life when I've struggled with painful situations, I have turned to Mary and the Rosary. This year, it was the fourth Glorious Mystery that gave me special comfort in my time of grieving.

Generally, I have always considered the "Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary" as an invitation to pray for the graced end of days for myself and loved ones, but for me, there was a shift.

Praying for Mary's intercession in death also became about asking for her help in letting go: letting go of my attachments to a relationship that was ended, turning over to her care all of my concerns for someone that I still have affection for, and waiting patiently for the grace of transformation that comes with every death in all of its many forms.

As Catholics, turning over our needs to Mary is not the same as giving up. We are not saying that nothing can be done or that a situation is hopeless. "To fold 'em" is not to despair. However, it is an acknowledgment that there are circumstances that we cannot control, that there comes a point when trying to "fix" something is detrimental to us and others, and that there are people we need to walk away from in our lives, no matter how much it breaks our hearts to do so.

We turn these people and situations over to Mary, knowing that her deepest longing is to see God enter more fully into all of our lives and into our world. She will do everything possible to care for those that we cannot. She will watch over those who no longer want us watching over them.

We are seeing many deaths in our world at this time. There are so many things that we have no control over. Let us release the tremendous weight that comes with trying to alter circumstances or people that it is not in our power to change.

Let us learn to "know when to fold 'em/ know when to walk away" in the most hopeful sense of what this means and entrust everything and everyone to Mary, our loving, heavenly Mother.

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