

Rosary guided mother through parenting and depression

Joanne Schultz credits the Rosary with helping her navigate her struggles – from loneliness, to parenting, to depression.

“The first time I remember praying the Rosary was on a camping trip. It was a cold, stormy night; we all had a hard time settling in,” said Schultz, the administrative assistant for Catholic Charities Shelter Services in Vancouver.

“My mom started praying the Rosary. There was five of us in the family, so we eventually all led a decade,” said Schultz. “That is my earliest memory. I was maybe 8 or 9 at the time.”

She learned how to pray the Rosary in French, then in English. It was simply a prayer she’d use in times of need or after going to confession – until her grandfather became very ill.

“He probably spent seven to 10 years in the hospital” due to a series of strokes. He died when Schultz was in her early 20s.

“I remember praying the Rosary a lot and just praying for peace for him.”

Schultz’s grandmother, on the other side of the family, was the only person she knew who was deeply devoted to Mary. Her grandmother gave her a rosary blessed by Pope John Paul II, which she still carries around and draws strength from today.

“When I was in need of peace in my life, I would start to pray it.”

Those beads were out again when that grandmother passed away, when Schultz was single and worried she’d never meet the man of her dreams, and when she and her husband started a family. By the time they had their third child, praying the Rosary was a regular devotion in their home.

“Whenever I needed help, whenever I needed some guidance, whenever I was struggling as a parent, it became: ‘I don’t know what to do now, so I’m going to pray the Rosary.’”

Schultz, now a mother of four, would pray the Rosary while her children were sick, cranky, afraid, or couldn’t sleep. “Mary has always been there to guide me on my journey of motherhood.”

Our Lady has also been there for Schultz in her darkest days. Schultz was first diagnosed with post-partum depression, but was later able to trace its roots back 15 years.

“When I’m struggling and when I’m low, that’s when I turn to Mary and the

Rosary.”

About a year ago, Schultz was in a crisis she calls a “fog of death.” She became very depressed one evening and started drifting in and out of consciousness. Eventually she recognized her own voice – yelling the Hail Mary.

By 11 p.m., she became fully conscious with the help of emergency workers who took her to the hospital for the night. She asked nurses to bring her a rosary and she now keeps a set of beads in every purse and coat pocket.

“At that point it became a daily devotion,” she said. “I’ve always believed that God speaks to us in different ways, and to me I really feel that connection to the Rosary.”

She said the Marian prayer offers “peace and comfort, and a sense of knowing you’re not alone.”