



# The Word

Mary Undoer of Knots,  
Bless you today and  
forever. Amen!

## Liturgical Reflections

### HOLY FATHER'S INTENTIONS FOR OCTOBER

**Universal:** That journalists, by carrying out their work, may always be motivated by respect for truth and a strong sense of ethics.

**Evangelization:** That World Mission Day, October 16, 2016 may renew within all Christian communities the joy of the Gospel and the responsibility to announce it.

The month of October is dedicated to the [Holy Rosary](#). The Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary is celebrated on October 7. October falls during the liturgical season known as [Ordinary Time](#). During October the Liturgy does not focus on one particular mystery of Christ, but views the mystery of Christ in all its aspects. We follow the life of Christ through the Gospels, and focus on the teachings and parables of Jesus and what it means for each of us to be a follower of Christ.

October usually is an enjoyable time of the year in the United States. The autumn season manifests itself with wonderful fall foliage in many parts of the country. The temperatures are cooler, inviting people outdoors for nature walks, apple or pumpkin picking. School routines are more established and football season is in full swing. The celebrations of the Church for the month of October are also wonderful and unique. The feasts of some of the most popular saints of the universal Church are celebrated during this month: St. Therese the Little Flower (France), St. Francis of Assisi (Italy) and St. Teresa of Avila (Spain). These saints come from different countries, and in honoring these saints we can include cultural dishes or activities from each country to make the feast day even more special. Read more about the lives of these saints. Perhaps you can pick one virtue that each saint practiced well and try to implement it.

The feasts in October also include two of the most popular, time-honored devotions of Catholics, the devotion to the [Holy Rosary](#) (October 7) and the [Guardian Angels](#) (October 2). In October 2002 our Holy Father John Paul II wrote the Apostolic Letter [Rosarium Virginis Mariae \(the Rosary of the Virgin Mary\)](#). This letter introduced five new mysteries, called the Luminous or Mysteries of Light, which are (1) Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan, (2) Jesus' self-manifestation at the wedding of Cana, (3) Proclamation of the Kingdom of God, with the call to conversion, (4) the Transfiguration, and (5) the Institution of the Eucharist. Try to make a more concerted effort to pray the Rosary together as a family during the month of October, read the Apostolic Letter to understand the beauty of this devotion more deeply, and pray the new Luminous mysteries. October 16 is known as "Pope Day" on which we celebrate the gift of the papacy and our current pope.

Every person has a guardian angel assigned to them, and October 2 the Church celebrates the role of these Guardian Angels. We should show devout gratitude to God for placing these angels at our service. Having a guardian should give us confidence during all of life's difficulties. Every Catholic should know the *Angele Dei* (Angel of God) prayer and pray it often. The *Directory on Popular Piety* suggests that families pray it at morning and evening prayers or after the Angelus.

All Hallows' Eve or Halloween heralds the month of November with emphasis on the Communion of Saints, especially the Church Suffering (the Poor Souls in Purgatory) and the second coming of Christ or *Parousia*. This last day of October on the secular calendar is second only to Christmas in commercial preparations. The secular festivities center on ghouls, witches and devils, but the Christian counterpart focus on the communion of saints. As Christians living a "Catholic Culture", we should try to explore the Christian roots of the [Halloween](#) festivities.

## MINISTRY MUSINGS

### At the end of life, searching for the right word:

During the first few days that my mother spent in hospice, I silently sat by her bed watching her chest rise and fall, listening to her moan, counting her doses of Ativan, Tylenol, and Morphine, and tallying the days she'd been without food and water. On day five of my vigil, I asked her nurse, "How long can Mom live like this? She hasn't opened her eyes or eaten or had anything to drink for five days." The nurse replied, "The journey varies. But it may take a while because your mom is fighting."

She's fighting?

On day six, I asked, "How much longer can this go on?"

An administrator answered, "After eighty-seven years, your Mom's not giving up easily. She's a strong lady. She's fighting." Fighting?

On day seven, when my chest constricted with each of Mom's rasping inhalations and rattling exhalations, I pleaded, "Why is this taking so long?"

The nurse touched my arm and said, "Because your mom is fighting." Fighting what? Death? Life? Me?

The word "fighting" made me angry. Fighting is an action verb.

Fighting is a purposeful act. Fighting requires thought. I wanted to yell, "Mom is not fighting! She's not rallying the troops or stockpiling ammunition. The emaciated body lying in that bed isn't plotting her next move. That body is nothing more than a Venus flytrap, a living organism capable of survival but incapable of fighting!"

Didn't they understand that I was tortured by the word "fighting"?

They said "your mom is fighting" and I heard "Your mom is fighting to live while you've agreed to withhold food and water so she'll die."

They said "fighting" and I translated that one word into, "Your mom is fighting, but you're furious because she isn't dying fast enough." They said "fighting" and I felt they were asking me "why aren't you helping your mother?" I held Mom's hand and named the people waiting for her in heaven: I told her that soon she'd see Dad, her mom, her twin brother, and two of her grandchildren. I tried to say, "Stop fighting", but I couldn't. "Fighting" was the wrong word. But what was the right word? What word did I need?

I took my phone from my purse and searched for answers via the internet. I Googled, "How long can a person live without eating?", "Does it hurt to starve to death?", and "fighting death." In an article published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, I read that withholding nutrition and hydration is not synonymous with eating. Eating is much more than ingesting food and water. Eating is a social act. Eating is happily buttering your bread even if it's burned or blowing out candles on your birthday cake. Eating is holding hands around the table, bowing your heads, and giving thanks. Months before entering hospice, Mom had forgotten how to walk to the dinner table, how to hold a fork, and even, how to chew food.

The same article promised that good nursing care and the body's release of endogenous opioids would block pain and discomfort during starvation. So, if I could trust what I read, Mom was not hurting. Instead, she was resting comfortably with good nursing care. In another article, I read that hospice patients can linger for seventeen days or more without food or water. Seventeen days. I ached for those other daughters sitting with their moms for seventeen agonizing days, and I prayed that I would not be one of them. Then, I clicked on an article titled, "What Happens to My Body Right After I Die." In the third paragraph I read, "At the moment of death, all the muscles in the body relax ..."

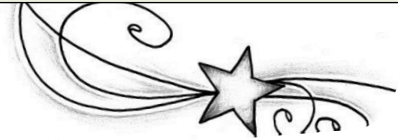
I read the line again. "At the moment of death, all the muscles relax"

My eyes lingered on the word "relax." As I stared at it, I took a deep breath and felt the knot in my stomach ease.

Maybe "fighting" is the word that an endless line of others needed or will need as they watch their loved ones slowly exit life, but it wasn't the word I needed.

I needed the word "relax." That word felt comforting, compassionate, and acceptable.

On day eight, I didn't ask the nurses, "How much longer?" I didn't need meaningless words to fill the space between the question and the inevitable, unknowable answer. Instead, I whispered in Mom's ear, "I love you." And then, I sat patiently by her bed and waited for her to relax. And finally, on day nine, as I held her hand, she did.  
*K. Anne Smith is a speech pathologist.*



### Important Items

#### **Bulletin Reminder**

Beginning the week of October 9<sup>th</sup> our Ministries are sponsoring a "reminder" on the add page of the bulletin. The reminder reads: Pray for those who have no one to pray for them. Please remind those you visit that this is their merciful mission as much as it is ours. The reminder will run for 1 year.

#### **Safe Environment Program**

Many of you will be receiving an email in early October letting you know it is time to retrain for SEP(email will be from cathdal.org) and will connect you to a link to do online retraining. Those of you who wish to view a video at HS may do so Wednesday, October 12 at 7 p.m.

**Ministry of Consolation Training for the Dioceses @ HS is Oct. 15, Oct. 29 and Nov 12.** Registration Forms are available in the Community Center. Registration deadline is October 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Ministry of Consolation  
Debriefing is October 15  
at Christ the King**

**When you are filling out your  
Christmas Cards this Year take  
a Card and Send to this Address:**

**A Recovering American Soldier  
C.O. Walter Reed  
Army Medical Center  
6900 Georgia Avenue  
NW Washington, D.C.  
20307-5001**



**Pass this on and Think of how many  
Cards these Wonderful, Special People  
who have Sacrificed so much would  
get. Please Share on your Wall,  
it's the Least we can do!**