May I say, perhaps immodestly, that I try to say prayers twice a day: when I get up in the morning and when I go to bed at night. I am not always successful, but I notice that when I do my day just seems to go better — it just does.

I try to make my prayers a combination of traditional prayers, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, and some other prayers that are just in my own words.

As much as I try not to do so I notice that my mind frequently wanders during prayers, especially during the traditional prayers. I have tried all kinds of aids that I have heard and read about and they seem to work for better concentration for awhile and then I’m back to my old habits of intermittent distractibility: the Devil’s playground.

I suppose one of my problems is that I have said the traditional prayers for so many years now and when the words come out they are, as of their very nature, a repetition of what I have said before and in my human mind I tend to not look at the real or deeper meaning.

That reminds me of nursery rhymes.

If you look behind the words of nursery rhymes there are some interesting stories there. Looking on the internet for Meanings To Nursery Rhymes you will find such articles as “The Horrible Meanings Behind Nursery Rhymes” and “10 Sinister Origins of Nursery Rhymes” and “The Dark Origins of 11 Classic Nursery Rhymes.”

For example:
Ring around the rosy, pocket full of posies, ashes, ashes, we all fall down.

Actually we are probably talking about the Bubonic Plague here, the rossette symptoms on the skin, posies to keep the smell down, and the final trip to cremation of the bodies.

Yuk.

How about…

Mary Mary quite contrary, how does your garden grow? With silver bells and cockle shells, and pretty maids all in a row.

Well, that’s actually about Mary Queen of Scots who filled “gardens” or graves with victims of her torture (“silver bells and cockle shells”) finalized by the “Maid” or as the guillotine was known!

Or…

Rub a dub dub, three men in a tub, and how do you think they got there? The butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker.

I don’t even want to think about what’s behind that one.

I now find myself doing 2 things: (1) before I pray I say “Help me not make this like a nursery rhyme that I say without meaning” and, (2) I have skipped reading nursery rhymes to my grandchildren and read them something less scary — like Harry Potter.