

How to Pray the Rosary

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Although the rosary does require the recitation of several prayers, the rosary is so much more than that. Meditation and Contemplation sit at the heart of praying the rosary.

Meditation is a quest. When we meditate, we ponder and seek to understand God through the life of Jesus Christ, the way God is working in our life, and we discern what God might be calling us to do. Christian meditation differs from Eastern forms of meditation in that while Eastern meditation asks one to “empty” one’s mind, Christian meditation asks one to let go of one’s self and allow God to fill one up. Christian meditation is an active exercise of wonder that ends in a believer standing in awe before the mystery of God and His ceaseless quest for unity with us, His creatures.

Contemplation is similar to meditation. As defined by Teresa of Avila, contemplation is “a Divine union in which the Lord takes His delight in the soul and the soul takes its delight in Him.” When we contemplate the rosary, we set out with a real awareness of Jesus’ presence in each mystery and, as we pray, we seek ways to know Him better and come closer to His loving heart. Prayerful contemplation will often employ the imagination as we picture ourselves with Mary and Jesus in the mystery we are contemplating. Contemplation can be aided by gazing upon an image or reading scripture passages.

But, why Mary, you might still be wondering. Why recite the Hail Mary 53 times? Why not instead, as some might say, go to Jesus?

Simply, Mary desires nothing more than to bring us closer to Jesus. She is a mediator who stands between us and Jesus. She is eager to help us understand her Son better, and every time we look to Mary, she helps us transfer our gaze to God. Mary is there to help and love us. As many great saints have realized before us: the shortest path to Jesus is through Mary. When we pray the rosary, we are seeking Jesus by asking Mary to help us find Him in all His glorious fullness.

The act of praying the rosary entails (1) saying certain prayers (listed below), (2) in a certain order while touching the beads of the rosary to keep track and (3) meditating on specific “mysteries” or events taken from the lives of Mary and Jesus. There is a different mystery to meditate on for each decade of the rosary. There are 20 mysteries in total, but the mysteries have been broken up into sets of five, and the faithful generally only pray through five mysteries at a time.

Prayers of the Rosary

APOSTLES’ CREED

(said while holding the crucifix)
I BELIEVE IN GOD, the Father almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into Hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father almighty. He shall come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

OUR FATHER

(said the the beginning of each decade)
OUR FATHER, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

HAIL MARY

(said 10 times each decade)
HAIL MARY, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

GLORY BE

(said after Hail Mary's are concluded)

GLORY BE to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

FATIMA PRAYER

(said after Glory Be)

O MY JESUS, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of Hell; lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Thy mercy. Amen.

HAIL HOLY QUEEN

(said after last decade is concluded)

HAIL HOLY QUEEN, mother of mercy; our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn, then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us. And after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ. Amen.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

(said after Hail Holy Queen)

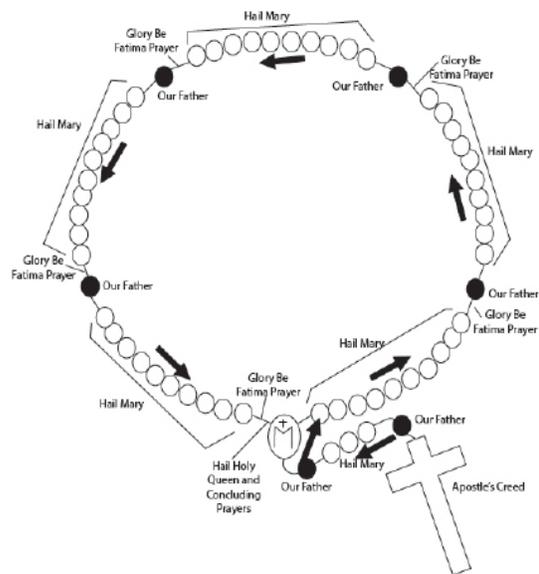
Let us pray. O GOD, whose only begotten Son, by His life, death, and resurrection, has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life, grant, we beseech Thee, that meditating upon these mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise, through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

MEMORARE (Optional)

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Process of Praying the Rosary

1. Make the Sign of the Cross and say the Apostles' Creed, while holding the crucifix.
2. Move to the first bead on the string extending from the circle. Say an Our Father for the intentions of the Holy Father.
3. Move to the three beads on the string extending from the circle. Say three Hail Marys with the following intentions: An increase in 1. Faith, 2. Hope, and 3. Love.
4. Move to the space following the three beads and say the Glory Be, and the Fatima Prayer.
5. Move to the next bead on the string extending from the circle. Announce the First Mystery. Read the scripture passage corresponding with that mystery and quietly contemplate, (optional). Then say the Our Father.
6. Move to the beads on the circle. Say ten Hail Marys, one for each bead in that section, while meditating on the Mystery.
7. Move to the space following the last Hail Mary, and say the Glory Be, and the Fatima Prayer.
8. Move to the single bead, announce the Mystery, read scripture and say the Our Father, followed by ten Hail Mary's. Repeat the same process for the remaining decades of the rosary.
9. Following the 5th mystery, say the Hail Holy Queen and Concluding Prayers.
10. Make the sign of the cross.



Mysteries of the Rosary

Joyful (Monday and Saturday)

1. The Annunciation of Gabriel to Mary
2. The Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth
3. The Nativity of Our Lord
4. The Presentation of Our Lord
5. The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple

Luminous (Thursday)

1. The Baptism of Our Lord in the Jordan
2. The Wedding at Cana
3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God
4. The Transfiguration of Our Lord
5. The Last Supper, Institution of the Eucharist

Sorrowful (Tuesday and Friday)

1. The Agony of Our Lord in the Garden
2. The Scourging of Our Lord at the Pillar
3. The Crowning of Our Lord with Thorns
4. Our Lord Carries the Cross to Calvary
5. The Crucifixion and Death of Our Lord

Glorious (Sunday and Wednesday)

1. The Resurrection of Our Lord
2. The Ascension of Our Lord into Heaven
3. The Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost
4. The Assumption of Mary into Heaven
5. The Coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven and Earth