

# 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.



## 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