

THE HOLY ROSARY, HOW TO PRAY IT

Msgr Peter J Elliott

Pope John Paul II described the Rosary as his 'favourite prayer'. Since the Middle Ages, millions of Catholics have prayed and meditated with these beads. The rhythm of the simple prayers, reflection on the great events of our Redemption draw us into Mary's school of prayer. The Gospel is at our fingertips, the praise of God is on our lips, his word is in our hearts, as we pray the Rosary. By setting aside time for this greatest Marian devotion, we respond to her appeal for prayer and penance, made at Fatima. We make reparation on the sake of this world. As the praying Church, "we wait in Joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ", whose great mysteries have redeemed the world and brought us salvation.

THE METHOD OF THE HOLY ROSARY

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

On the crucifix:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will 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.

On the separate bead:

Our Father . . .

On each of the three beads:

Hail Mary . . .

(You may contemplate Mary as 1. adopted daughter of the Father, 2. Mother of God the Son, 3. Spouse of the Holy Spirit)

On the chain:

Glory be to the Father . . .

The Five Decades of the Rosary are said according to either the Five Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful or Glorious Mysteries Meditate on each Mystery as you pray.

On each separate or large bead:

Our Father . . .

On each of the ten beads, a decade:

Hail Mary . . .

On the chain:

Glory be to the Father . . .

After each decade:

O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, and save us from the fires of hell. Bring all souls to heaven, especially those who most need your mercy.

At the end of the five decades:

Hail, Holy Queen . . .

Pray for us, holy Mother of God.

R/ That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:

O God, whose only begotten Son, by his life, death and resurrection, has purchased for us the reward of eternal life; grant, we beseech you, that as we meditate upon these mysteries in the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that we may imitate what they contain, and obtain what they promise, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Joyful Mysteries

1. *The Annunciation.* The angel Gabriel comes to Mary to tell her that she is to be Mother of God. (Luke 1:26-38)
2. *The Visitation.* With the Word-made-flesh in her womb, Our Lady goes to tell her cousin Elizabeth of her joy. (Luke 1:39-56)
3. *The Birth of Our Lord.* At Bethlehem, Mary brings forth her Son, protected by St Joseph, welcomed and adored by shepherds and wise men. (Luke 2:1-21)
4. *The Presentation in the Temple.* Mary and Joseph present the baby Jesus in the Temple, as the first-born. Simeon predicts Mary's sorrows. (Luke 2:22-40)
5. *The Finding of the Boy Jesus in the Temple.* Mary and Joseph find the lost twelve-year-old Christ, teaching the wise men of Israel in the Temple. (Luke 2:41-52)

The Luminous Mysteries (*The Mysteries of Light*)

1. *The Baptism of Our Lord.* Jesus is baptized in all righteousness and the Holy Spirit descends upon him. (Matthew 3:13-17) or (Mark 1:9-11) or (Luke 3:15-21)
2. *Jesus manifests his Divinity.* At the wedding feast of Cana Jesus changes water into wine at the intercession of his Blessed Mother. (John 2:1-11)
3. *The Proclamation of the Kingdom.* Jesus proclaims the Kingdom of God with his call for conversion. (Matthew 4:12-17) or (Mark 1:14-39) or (Luke 4:14-15)
4. *The Transfiguration.* The glory of Christ is manifested to Peter, James and John on

Mount Tabor between Moses and Elijah as the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. Mark (9:8) or (Matthew(17:2-5) or Mark (9:2-8) or Luke (9:28-36)

5. *The Institution of the Eucharist.* Christ's priceless gift at the Last Supper. (Matthew 26:17-28) or Mark (14:12-16) or Luke (22:19-20)

The Sorrowful Mysteries

1. *The Agony in the Garden.* After the Last Supper, Jesus prays in anguish in the garden of Gethsemane, knowing that He is to suffer and die. (Matthew 26:30-56, or, Mark 14:26-50, or Luke 22:39-53)
2. *The Scourging.* Our Lord is arrested and put to trial before the High Priest and Pilate, who has him flogged with a scourge of leather and lead. (Matthew 27:24-26, or, Mark 15:12-15, or John 19:1)
3. *The Crowning with Thorns.* The soldiers in the Praetorium mock Jesus by pressing upon his head a royal crown of thorns. (Matthew 27:27-31, or, Mark 15:16-20, John 18:33-40, 19:1-16)
4. *Carrying the Cross.* Our Lord carries his own Cross to Calvary, and meets his sorrowing Mother on the way. (Matthew 27-32, or, Mark 15:21, or, Luke 23:26-31)
5. *The Crucifixion.* Our Lord dies on the Cross, and gives us his Mother as our Mother. His dead body is placed in her arms. (Matthew 27:33-66, or, Mark 15:22-47, Luke 23:32-57, or John 19:17-42)

The Glorious Mysteries

1. *The Resurrection.* In his own body, the Lord rises in glory from the dead. He appears to his disciples and brings joy to his beloved Mother. (Matthew 28:1-15, or, Mark 16:1-14, or, Luke 24:1-49, or, John 20 and 21)
2. *The Ascension.* Jesus Christ farewells his apostles and ascends to heaven in their sight, having sent them out on his mission. (Matthew 28:16-20, or, Mark 16:14-20, or, Luke 24:50-53, or, Acts 1:1-11)
3. *The Descent of the Holy Spirit.* At Pentecost, God the Holy Spirit comes upon the apostles, as Christ our Lord promised, to make them leaders and shepherds of the Church. (Acts 1: 12-14, 2:1-42, or, John 14:15-31, 15:26-27)
4. *The Assumption of Our Lady.* At the close of her earthly life, Mary Immaculate is taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven. (I Corinthians 15:20-26, 51-58, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)
5. *The Coronation of Our Lady.* Mary is crowned Queen of Heaven, a sign of the glory of the Church in eternity, our hope of resurrection and eternal bliss. (Revelation 12:1-6, 10, 21:1-14, 17-21)

Meditating on the Mysteries

There are many ways of praying the rosary. Because it is a form of meditation, it is a prayer that requires time. It is a measured act of faith, not merely the repetition of vocal prayers.

The most simple way is to "picture" the event of each decade as the beads slip through your fingers. The rhythm of familiar prayers, repeated again and again, helps raise the mind above distractions. Contact with the beads is a kind of anchor, reminding us to attend to the mystery, to contemplate the saving events of the life of Jesus and Mary.

To "picture" an event, we must be familiar with the words of the Scriptures. Taking the First Joyful Mystery as an example, knowledge would help us see in our mind's eye the Virgin in her home in Nazareth, the coming of the angel, her fear, his reassuring words, her response of faith and obedience. Reading the Bible is the best guide to the rosary. Some people also find familiar works of religious art or films helpful as they picture the saving events.

But we should go deeper into the meaning of these events. Knowing our Catholic doctrine is the key to such meditation on God's saving mercy. The Joyful Mysteries celebrate the Incarnation. The Sorrowful Mysteries emphasize the Redemption. The Luminous Mysteries call Christ's public life to our attention. The Glorious Mysteries centre round the Resurrection and our eternal destiny. But the saving events are not only past events in history. They are active and present in our lives. We have been baptized into these Mysteries. The life of Jesus and Mary shows us that through joy, and through sorrow, we can come to glory. Believing and living the Faith, through Mass and the sacraments, prayer and penance, we share in the saving work of Jesus Christ. With Mary, we join Christ our Lord, members of his pilgrim Church on earth, hoping for the glory of heaven.

Another way to pray the rosary is to make it intercession, prayer for others. It is best to decide beforehand for whom we wish to offer a specific decade. The Mystery itself may suggest an intention, for example, the finding of Christ in the Temple suggests prayer for children and for their faith and instruction in the faith. The descent of the Holy Spirit suggests prayer for the Pope and bishops of the Church. The Annunciation or the Visitation suggests prayer for mothers and for the unborn.

But we can also pray the rosary for ourselves - asking God to give us specific virtues and graces. As a prayer of petition, the Mysteries could be offered according to this plan:

The Joyful Mysteries

1. *The Annunciation* - for humility, obedience to God, trust.
2. *The Visitation* - for love of my neighbour, generosity and hospitality.
3. *The Nativity* - for a spirit of poverty, detachment from things.
4. *The Presentation* - for obedience to the Church.
5. *The Finding in the Temple* - for true wisdom.

The Luminous Mysteries

1. *The Baptism of Our Lord* - for the desire to please God.
2. *The Manifestation of Christ's Divinity* - for obedience to Christ as Mary advised the servants.
3. *The Proclamation of the Kingdom* - for a spirit of evangelism.
4. *The Transfiguration* - for attentiveness to Christ's teaching.
5. *The institution of the Eucharist* - for a firm belief in and veneration of the Blessed Sacrament.

The Sorrowful Mysteries

1. *The Agony in the Garden* - for a spirit of prayer, strength in suffering.
2. *The Scourging* - for purity.
3. *The Crowning with Thorns* - for meekness, acceptance of suffering.
4. *The Carrying of the Cross* - for patience, ability to bear burdens.
5. *The Crucifixion* - for true contrition for my sins.

The Glorious Mysteries

1. *The Resurrection* - for perseverance in faith.
2. *The Ascension* - for a desire for heaven.
3. *Pentecost* - for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, growth in holiness and prayer.
4. *The Assumption* - for a love of the saints, charity for the holy souls.
5. *The Coronation of Our Lady* - for a good death.

The Rosary Indulgences

"A plenary indulgence is granted if the Rosary is recited in a church, or public oratory, or in a family group, a religious community or pious association; a partial indulgence is granted in other circumstances." Enchiridion 48. Five decades at least must be recited continuously, with devout meditation on the appropriate, mysteries, which are to be announced if said aloud.

An indulgence is the pardon granted by the Church for the debt of penance we owe for sin's. A plenary indulgence is a full pardon for such penances. A partial indulgence remits some penance owing. To gain a plenary indulgence you must be free from all attachment to sin, even venial sin. You must go to confession and receive Holy Communion and pray for the intentions of the Pope.

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A Pope remembers – the words of John Paul II on Wednesday, October 7th, 1981, at his first public audience after the assassination attempt on May 13th.

"Could I forget that the event in St Peter's Square took place on the day and at the hour when the first appearance of the Mother of Christ to the poor little shepherds has been remembered for over sixty years at Fatima in Portugal? For in everything that happened to me on that very day, I felt that extraordinary motherly protection and care, which turned out to be stronger than the deadly bullet.

"Today is the memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary. Now that nearly five months later it has been granted me to meet you again at the Wednesday audience, I want these first words that I address to you to be words of gratitude, love and deep trust, just as the Holy Rosary is and always remains a prayer of gratitude, love and trustful request: the prayer of the Mother of the Church. I once again encourage and invite you all to this prayer."

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Fifteen Promises of Mary to Christians Who Recite the Rosary

1. Whoever shall faithfully serve me by the recitation of the rosary, shall receive signal graces.
2. I promise my special protection and the greatest graces to all those who shall recite the rosary.
3. The rosary shall be a powerful armour against hell, it will destroy vice, decrease sin, and defeat heresies.
4. It will cause virtue and good works to flourish; it will obtain for souls the abundant mercy of God; it will withdraw the hearts of men from the love of the world and its vanities, and will lift them to the desire of eternal things. Oh, that souls would sanctify themselves by this means.
5. The soul which recommends itself to me by the recitation of the rosary, shall not perish.
6. Whoever shall recite the rosary devoutly, applying him self to the consideration of its sacred mysteries shall never be conquered by misfortune. God will not chastise him in His justice, he shall not perish by an unprovided death; if he be just he shall remain in the grace of God, and become worthy of eternal life.
7. Whoever shall have a true devotion for the rosary shall not die without the sacraments of the Church.
8. Those who are faithful to recite the rosary shall have during their life and at their death the light of God and the plenitude of His graces; at the moment of death they shall participate in the merits of the saints in paradise.
9. I shall deliver from purgatory all those who have been devoted to the rosary.
10. The faithful children of the rosary shall merit a high degree of glory in heaven.
11. You shall obtain all you ask of me by the recitation of the rosary.
12. All those who propagate the holy rosary shall be aided by me in their necessities.
13. I have obtained from my Divine Son that all the advocates of the rosary shall have for intercessors the entire celestial court during their life and at the hour of death.
14. All who recite the rosary are my sons, and brothers of my only son Jesus Christ.
15. Devotion to my rosary is a great sign of predestination.

(As given to St. Dominic and Blessed Alan)