



The Rosary is divided into the joyful, the sorrowful, and the glorious mysteries. In the joyful mysteries, we meditate on: (1) the Annunciation; (2) The Visitation; (3) The Birth of Jesus; (4) The Presentation; and (5) The Finding in the Temple. In the sorrowful mysteries we meditate on (1) The Agony

in the Garden; (2) The Scourging; (3) The Crown of Thorns; (4) The Carrying of the Cross, and (5) The Crucifixion. In the glorious mysteries we meditate on (1) The Resurrection; (2) The Ascension; (3) The Descent of the Holy Ghost; (4) The Assumption; and (5) The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin.

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WHAT IS THE ROSARY?

The Rosary is a prayer in honor of the Blessed Virgin, consisting of one hundred and fifty *Hail Marys* and fifteen *Our Fathers* accompanied by meditation on the life, passion, and glory of Christ.

1. In the *first centuries* of Christianity there were many hermits who could not read the psalms in the psalter. So they used to substitute one *Our Father* and one *Hail Mary* for each psalm. To note the number, they made use of stones, or seeds strung on a cord.

The word *rosary* means a garland or wreath of roses. Each prayer said in the Rosary is a spiritual rose offered to our Blessed Mother.

2. *St. Dominic* was the first to make

general the custom of substituting 150 *Hail Marys* for the 150 Psalms.

When, in the thirteenth century, heresy ravaged southern France and northern Italy, the Holy Father appointed St. Dominic to preach against the heretical doctrines. When, after exerting a great deal of effort, Dominic saw very little results, he prayed to the Blessed Virgin, and used the rosary as a means for the conversion of the heretics. By this method, which was everywhere welcomed, his campaign became a complete success.

3. The Rosary is a powerful prayer to obtain the grace of God through the *intercession* of the Blessed Virgin. How innumerable are the conversions, known and unknown, which had their beginning in the devotion of the Rosary! Priests and religious as well as other devout Christians make a practice of reciting it daily.

In times of danger and calamity, the Rosary has been the means by which miraculous aid has been obtained. This was the case in the wars with the Turks, the victory of Lepanto (1571), and the deliverance of Vienna (1683). It was in thanksgiving for these victories that the Holy Father instituted the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Rosary on October the 7th.

3. The very *simplicity* of the Rosary makes it a prayer for children. For this reason it is the prayer of the little and the humble, and most pleasing in the eyes of God.

One of the devotees of the Rosary was that great missionary, Saint Francis Xavier. Wherever he went, he preached this devotion. However busy or fatigued he was, he never omitted saying the Rosary every day. He used to carry his rosary around his neck openly, in honor of the Blessed Mother.

4. At the same time the rosary is a prayer of *contemplation*: the truths discovered from meditation on the mysteries presented can never be exhausted by even the most learned.

Frequently St. Francis Xavier was called to distant missions to attend the sick and administer the sacraments to the dying. As it was impossible for him to attend to so many at one time, he used to send rosaries to the sick, advising them to pray and if they could not, to wear the beads around their neck. He assured the sick that they would either improve altogether or feel better, till he could arrive, so that they should not die without the sacraments. This promise was always complied with; the patients using the rosary as St. Francis Xavier recommended were always given time to live at least until the holy missionary arrived and administered the Last Sacraments.

How is the Rosary said?—Ordinarily, only one-third of the Rosary is said: fifty Hail Marys and five Our Fathers prayed on a string of beads slipped through the fingers.

The Rosary combines vocal with mental prayer. It is a summary of the most important parts of the Gospels, a most useful and powerful prayer. Catholics should not fail to say at least five decades of the Rosary each day.

1. Ordinarily, we *begin* the Rosary by saying the Apostles' Creed. Then we say one Our Father, three Hail Marys, and one Glory be to the Father for the increase of faith, hope and charity. This is the introduction, but it is not necessary for the gaining of the indulgence.

For every third part an indulgence of five years may be gained; if recited in company with others once a day, an indulgence of ten years (Rac. 395).

2. We say the Our Fathers on the large beads and the Hail Marys on the small beads. One Our Father, and the ten Hail Marys following, are called a *decade*. Five decades make the *chaplet* of beads. It is customary to close each decade with a *Glory be to the Father*.

While reciting the Rosary, everyone must hold his own rosary in his hand, and touch the beads as he says the prayers. If several are saying the Rosary together, only one need have a rosary in his hand, to regulate the number of prayers.

3. While we say each decade, we should *meditate* upon one mystery of our faith. The Rosary is divided into the joyful, the sorrowful, and the glorious mysteries, each honoring respectively the life, the passion, and the glorification of Our Lord.

The objection is often made by non-Catholics that the Rosary is not a praiseworthy prayer because in it one prayer, the Hail Mary, is repeated so often. In reply to this objection we would say that one who has a feeling much at heart generally repeats over and over certain words that give expression to that feeling. Note a child begging for something. Besides, this practice has Holy Scripture itself, and even Our Lord, for a model: in the Psalms, the words "His mercy endureth forever" are repeated in only one psalm as many as twenty-seven times; the angels intimate that their song of "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts" is unceasing; in the Garden, Our Lord repeated His prayer.

What is the Litany of the Blessed Virgin?—The Litany of the Blessed Virgin is a prayer in which the most glorious titles are given to the Mother of God, as her intercession is invoked.

The Litany is a succession of glorious and symbolic salutations. In it we call her *Mystical Rose*, because the beauty of her soul fulfilled the prophecy, "I was exalted like a palm tree in Cades, and as a rose plant in Jericho" (Ecc. 24:18). We address her as *Tower of David* and *Tower of Ivory*, because she rises up above all men in beauty and strength of soul. She is called *House of Gold* because God Himself dwelt within her as in a Temple. She is the *Ark of the Covenant*, because as it contained the tables of the Mosaic Law, so she contained the Lawgiver of all, God. She is invoked as the *Gate of Heaven*, because through her we enter the heavenly kingdom. She is our *Morning Star* that lights our way Home, to God.

The Litany of the Blessed Virgin is often said to end the Rosary. This Litany is also called the **Litany of Loretto**, named after the Italian town of Loretto, where the holy house of Nazareth now stands.