

Why Catholics Say the Rosary

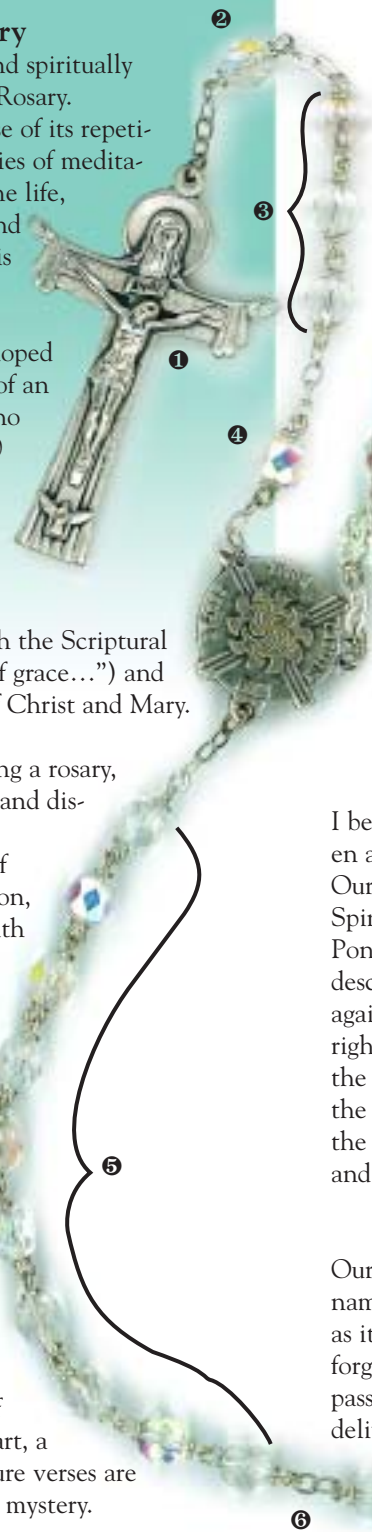
One of the most widely practiced and spiritually engaging Catholic devotions is the Rosary. Identified as a Marian prayer because of its repetition of Hail Marys, it is in fact a series of meditations (the mysteries) built around the life, death, and Resurrection of Christ and the Church's teachings regarding His mother.

The Rosary as we know it was developed in the Middle Ages. It evolved out of an ancient practice in which people who could not read Scripture recited 150 Our Fathers for the 150 Psalms. Strings of beads, called "pater-nosters," were used to keep track of the prayers.

Over time, this practice merged with the Scriptural greeting to Mary ("Hail Mary, full of grace...") and with the meditations on the lives of Christ and Mary.

One can say the Rosary without using a rosary, but the beads help keep one's place and dispose one to keep focused on prayer. People pray the Rosary in all sorts of environments: in quiet contemplation, while traveling, while exercising, with their families, or with an audiotape accompaniment. In groups or in a family, one person can say the first half of each prayer, while others respond with the second half.

When one prays the Rosary, it is important to focus not on the quantity of prayer, but on its depth. In praying the four sets of mysteries – the Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful, and Glorious – there is a profound encounter with the central truths of Revelation. The Rosary is, at its heart, a biblical prayer, which is why Scripture verses are often used for meditation with each mystery.



How to Pray the Rosary

Begin with the Sign of the Cross.

1 Pray the Apostles' Creed while holding the crucifix.

2 Pray an Our Father.

3 Pray three Hail Marys.

4 Pray the Glory Be, announce the first mystery, then pray an Our Father.

5 Pray ten Hail Marys (called a decade).

6 Pray the Glory Be and the Fatima Prayer.

7 Before each decade, announce the next mystery, followed by an Our Father.

For each set of ten beads, pray ten Hail Marys while meditating on the mystery.

After the five decades are completed, pray the Hail, Holy Queen.

Prayers of the Rosary

Apostles' Creed

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 the life everlasting. Amen.

Our Father

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

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 (The Doxology)

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

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

Hail, Holy Queen

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy. Hail, our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To you do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. To you do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn, then, most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward us and after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of your 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.

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How to Pray the Rosary



"The Rosary has accompanied me in moments of joy and in moments of difficulty. To it I have entrusted any number of concerns; in it I have always found comfort.... The Rosary is my favorite prayer.... Marvelous in its simplicity and its depth."

— Pope John Paul II, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*

"Madonna del Granduca" by Raphael

The Joyful Mysteries

Prayed on Mondays and Saturdays

The events surrounding the coming of Our Lord, God made man, are a cause for intense joy. We meditate on these mysteries asking Our Lady to help us discover the secret of Christian joy — the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh.



The Annunciation of the Lord

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph.... And he came to her and said, "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" — Luke 1:26-28

The Visitation

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah.... And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb. — Luke 1:39-41

The Nativity of the Lord

And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. — Luke 2:7

The Presentation of the Lord

And when the parents brought in the child Jesus ... he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." — Luke 2:27-30

The Finding in the Temple

After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed. — Luke 2:45-47

The Luminous Mysteries

Prayed on Thursdays

The public life of Our Lord reveals what the reign of God's Kingdom is like — both in the miracles He worked and in His preaching. We meditate on these mysteries asking Our Lady to help us to allow His light to shine in our darkness.



The Baptism of Jesus

And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove. — Matthew 3:16

The Wedding Feast of Cana

Jesus said to her, "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." ... This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee. — John 2:4-5, 11

The Invitation of Jesus

Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel." — Mark 1:14-15

The Transfiguration

And as [Jesus] was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white.... And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" — Luke 9:29-35

The Eucharist

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." — Matthew 26:26-27

The Sorrowful Mysteries

Prayed on Tuesdays and Fridays

The Passion and death of Our Lord reveal how much God loves us. We meditate on these mysteries asking Our Lady to help us comprehend this love and to experience its life-giving power.



The Agony in the Garden

And going a little farther [Jesus] fell on his face and prayed, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." — Matthew 26:39

The Scourging

Then [Pilate] released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified. — Matthew 27:26

The Crowning with Thorns

And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe upon him, and plaiting a crown of thorns they put it on his head, and put a reed in his right hand. — Matthew 27:28-29

The Carrying of the Cross

And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe, and put his own clothes on him, and led him away to crucify him.... They came upon a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; this man they compelled to carry his cross. — Matthew 27:31-32

The Crucifixion

And Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split. — Matthew 27:50-51

The Glorious Mysteries

Prayed on Wednesdays and Sundays

In triumph, Our Lord empowers us to follow Him courageously. We meditate on these mysteries asking Our Lady to intercede for us, that we may always keep in mind the glory of God as we seek to do His will here on earth.



The Resurrection

Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. — John 20:8

The Ascension of the Lord

He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." ... When he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. — Acts 1:7-9

The Descent of the Holy Spirit

There appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. — Acts 2:3-4

The Assumption of Our Blessed Mother

For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. — 1 Thessalonians 4:14

The Crowning of Mary as Queen of Heaven

A great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. — Revelation 12:1