

How to Pray the Rosary

THE ORIGIN OF THE ROSARY was in the monasteries of 9th-century Ireland. Lay people wanted to be able to recite the 150 Psalms with the monks, but were unable to read. So they began to recite 150 Our Fathers instead, counting them on 150 pebbles kept in a leather pouch. In about 1365, a Carthusian monk began to pray 150 Hail Marys in 15 decades, with an Our Father at the beginning of each decade. By the time the Dominicans began to spread the Rosary in the 15th century, a special meditation for each of the 150 Hail Marys had been added. Then, by the 16th and 17th centuries, the meditations had been simplified to 15 mysteries, one for each Our Father. Finally, our late Holy Father, Pope Saint John Paul II, added five new mysteries, the Mysteries of Light (Luminous Mysteries), to the Rosary in 2002, making the complete devotion 200 Hail Marys instead of the old 150.

To pray the Rosary, use the “Holy Rosary of Our Lady, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary” booklet. Begin by kneeling and clasping the Rosary in your folded hands. Have a prayer intention in mind. Pope John Paul asked that we always pray at least for the **GIFT OF PEACE** in the world and for the **FAMILY**. It is also good to pray for the **INTENTIONS OF THE POPE**. Have an intention for yourself, too, perhaps an increase in some virtue you are striving for or help in avoiding a certain sin.

From the **PREPARATORY PRAYERS** section of the booklet, pray the **I BELIEVE IN GOD** (the Apostles’ Creed) on the crucifix. Then pray an **OUR FATHER** on the first bead, followed by three **HAIL MARYS** on the next three beads. Most people pray for the intentions of an increase in **FAITH, HOPE, and CHARITY** on these beads, one intention per bead. To finish the preparatory prayers, pray a **GLORY BE** on the final bead before the medallion.

Move on to the Joyful Mysteries. Announce the first mystery, the Annunciation. Pray for the intention, for the love of humility. Meditate for a moment on the picture. Then pray the **OUR FATHER** on the medallion. Meditate on the first Scripture verse while praying a **HAIL MARY** on the first bead. (If you like, you could also meditate on a mental picture of the mystery, instead of using the Scripture verse.) Then move on to the second bead and verse, and so on. Finish the decade by praying a **GLORY BE** and an **O MY JESUS** on the large bead. Then go on to the next mystery, starting with the same large bead.

Our Lady has asked, in her appearances to saints, that we pray the entire Rosary each day. The best way to do this is to pray four times a day—perhaps at breakfast, lunch, dinner, and bedtime—one set of mysteries each time. If you find so much prayer too difficult, you can begin instead by praying one set of mysteries per day, so that over the week you will pray the entire Rosary. If you do this, Pope John Paul II recommended the following schedule:

Monday—Joyful Mysteries
Thursday—Luminous Mysteries
Sunday—Glorious Mysteries

Tuesday—Sorrowful Mysteries
Friday—Sorrowful Mysteries

Wednesday—Glorious Mysteries
Saturday—Joyful Mysteries

Finally, it is a very good thing if you join the Rosary Confraternity, a worldwide movement of prayer for peace. In exchange for promising to say the entire Rosary at least once per week, you receive many spiritual benefits. Membership is free. To learn more, go to www.rosary-center.org on the Web, or ask a priest.