



## FORWARD MINISTRY

helping God's people to GROW

# How to Pray the Rosary

*A simple guide compiled and prepared by Father David Chislett*

The Rosary is a traditional way of praying with the Lord Jesus and his mother Mary that takes us right through the Gospel. It can be used individually or with others. Some Anglican parishes have groups of people who belong to the Society of Mary, and they meet regularly to pray the Rosary together.

For a while it looked as if the Rosary was going out of fashion among Anglicans and Roman Catholics alike. But, over the last ten years or so there has been something of a revival of its use. I know this because I have been approached by a stream of people wanting to learn how to pray in this way. Some have come out of curiosity; others as a result of being embarrassed in a prayer group using this traditional devotion and not knowing the mechanics of what to do.

So, the following is the simplest of explanations, reflecting the most common way the Rosary is prayed. It also includes the "Luminous Mysteries" ("Mysteries of Light") which Pope John Paul II added to the Rosary on 16th October, 2002.

### SPONTANEITY AND STRUCTURE

Prayer is the work of God the Holy Spirit within us, inspiring us, enlightening us, and making us one with the great and eternal movement of love between God the Son (Jesus) and God the Father. It is COMMUNION and COMMUNICATION - a personal relationship that involves our hearts as well as our minds.

Sometimes we pray with effortless spontaneity, while at other times we use the inherited language of the Christian community.

There are also times of real difficulty in the spiritual life.



Two thousand years of Christian experience teaches us that being sincere and open to the Holy Spirit, loving God from the depths of our being and wanting to be close to him does not guarantee that prayer will always be easy. Luke 4:12 tells us that Jesus himself was "led by the Spirit into the desert . . . being tempted by the devil" (Luke 4:1-2), struggling with evil just as we do, but winning in the end. Hebrews 5:7 refers to the struggle of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane - and undoubtedly other times as well - when it says that "in the days of his flesh" he "offered up prayers and supplications, with strong cries and tears."

When WE find prayer difficult, traditional forms are really useful. They act as a kind of "scaffold" to the spiritual life; their well-worn words, hallowed by centuries of use, give shape to our aspirations and our yearnings; they help us to remain aware of God's presence. They deliver us from being captive to our fickle emotions.

A particular problem we all face from time to time is how to deal with distractions when we are praying. Some distractions come from outside ourselves, like the noise of the traffic or the television in the apartment next door. Many distractions, however, actually come from within ourselves, and - paradoxically - it is not until we get away from external distractions that we discover how noisy we really are on the inside! Our minds wander onto all sorts of things, and we find it almost impossible to be still. For hundreds of years Christians have found the Rosary to be a means of giving our minds something to think about, while at the same time helping us to be calm and recollected in God's presence.

But set forms of devotion such as the Rosary are not just for when we find prayer difficult. In the same way that all our human relationships combine structure and spontaneity, it is natural that our

relationship and intimacy with God should work the same way. Along with other set forms of prayer, regular use of the Rosary has been a means of great blessing to many who have incorporated it into the rhythm of their spiritual lives.

## THE MECHANICS

Like any boy in his cultural and spiritual tradition, Jesus learned a whole lot of prayers off by heart, including many of the psalms and other devotions that Jewish people say quietly or out loud to this day. We can also imagine him sitting at his Mother's knee, like any toddler, repeating what Mary taught him over and over again.

The Rosary is built around four familiar Christian prayers that many people have known since childhood - the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and the Glory Be - repeated in a particular order. The beads help us to remember where we are, and which prayer is coming up next.

Repeating these prayers quietly (or even silently) helps to still the noise in our heads, while the movement of fingering the beads can help us stop fidgeting and be still.

The therapeutic value of this was brought home to me a few years ago when an elderly parishioner's doctor told me that in his opinion her habit of saying the Rosary each day while using her beads was

the secret of her swift progress in recovering from a stroke!

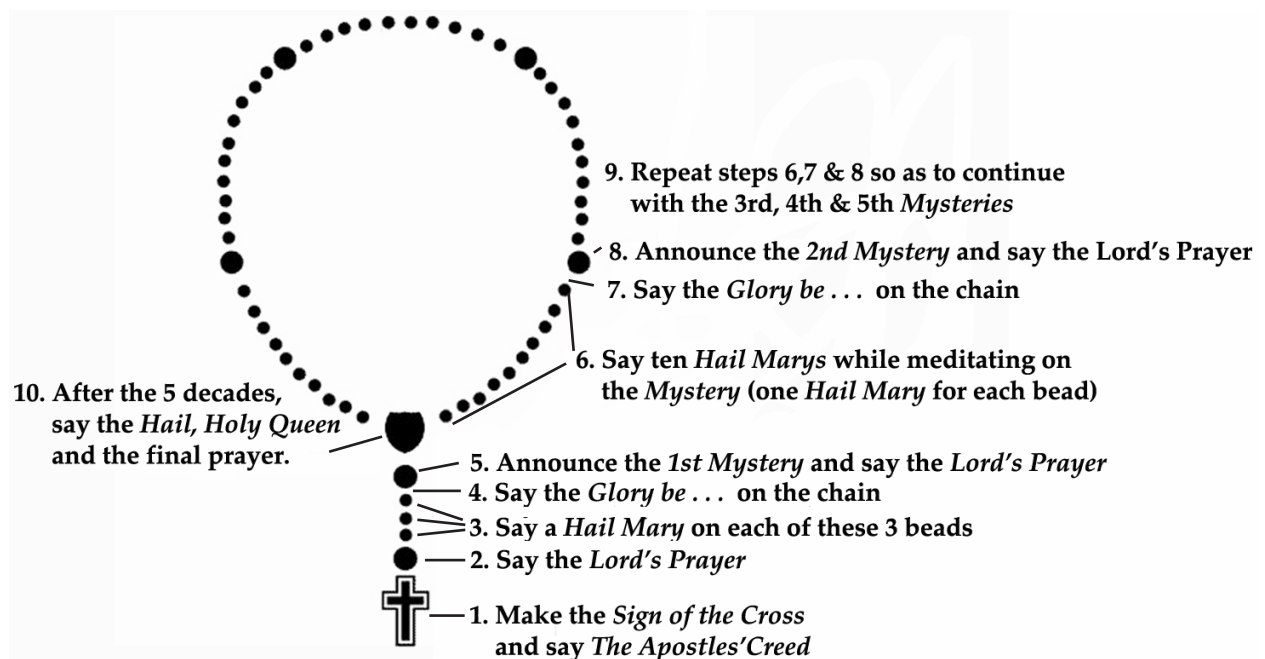
Our minds can be occupied as we make a picture or think of some words from the Gospels to do with the lives of Jesus and Mary. There are twenty episodes commonly used that are given the name "Mysteries of the Rosary."

We call these episodes "mysteries", not because they are complicated and confuse us, but because they are about the Lord Jesus Christ, all he did to save us, and his continuing presence with us now. St. Paul wrote to the early Christians: "The mystery is Christ among you, your hope of glory" (Colossians 1:25). So, while the glory of Jesus is revealed to us in the Church as we pray - and most of us can only glimpse a little of it at a time - praying the Rosary takes us behind the words of the Gospels which paint a picture of Jesus, enabling us to ponder those saving truths which undergird our spiritual lives. In this way so many Christians have grown in faith, hope and love.

## A DIAGRAM THAT WILL HELP

If you have never prayed the Rosary before, or if you find it strange and awkward, practise praying the Rosary by following this diagram. It is not complicated. Before long you will find yourself being drawn into contemplation of the mysteries, and you won't need to worry about the diagram any more!

# The Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary



## BACKGROUND MUSIC

The Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and the Glory Be repeated throughout are like the background music of a film which helps us to feel the mood of what is happening, but without drawing attention to itself. These prayers do the same thing by calming and relaxing our minds and hearts to meditate on the mysteries.

When we pray the Rosary alone, we say the prayers right through. When we pray the Rosary in a group, the leader starts off the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary. This adds to the sense of rhythm and community participation.

### The Apostles' Creed

*Leader:*

I believe in God the Father almighty,  
Maker 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, dead, and buried:  
He descended into hell;  
The third day he rose again from the dead;  
He ascended into heaven,  
and sitteth at the right hand of God  
the Father Almighty:  
From thence he shall come to judge  
the quick and the dead.

*All:*

**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.**

### The Lord's Prayer

*Leader:*

Our Father,  
who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name.  
Thy Kingdom come.  
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

*All:*

**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.**

### The Hail Mary

*Leader:*

Hail, Mary, full of grace.  
The Lord is with thee.  
Blessed art thou among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

*All:*

**Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners now  
and at the hour of our death.**

### The Glory Be

*Leader:*

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit;

*All:*

**As it was in the beginning,  
is now and ever shall be,  
World without end. Amen.**

## THROUGH THE GOSPEL

There are fifteen mysteries that draw us into the birth, life, suffering and death of Jesus. There are two mysteries that belong to the time before his birth, and there are three that take us into the life of the Church where we, like Mary (who is not just our Mother, but also our Sister in Christ) share in the Holy Spirit and journey expectantly to the glory of heaven.

The twenty Mysteries are arranged in four sets of five:

### The Joyful Mysteries

1. The Annunciation
2. Mary's Visit to Elizabeth
3. The Birth of Christ
4. The Presentation of Christ in the Temple
5. Jesus found among the Teachers of the Law

### The Luminous Mysteries

1. The Baptism of the Lord
2. The Wedding of Cana
3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom
4. The Transfiguration
5. The Institution of the Eucharist

### The Sorrowful Mysteries

1. The Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane
2. The Scourging of the Lord
3. The Mocking and Crowning with Thorns
4. The Carrying of the Cross
5. The Death of the Lord at Calvary

### The Glorious Mysteries

1. The Resurrection of the Lord
2. The Ascension
3. The Coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost
4. The Assumption of Mary
5. The Coronation of Mary  
and the Glory of the Saints

## WHICH MYSTERIES SHOULD I USE?

We can pray as many or as few of the Mysteries as we like. But in 2002 when he added the Luminous Mysteries, Pope John Paul recommended this pattern:

- Joyful Mysteries: Mondays and Saturdays
- Sorrowful Mysteries: Tuesdays and Fridays
- Luminous Mysteries: Thursdays
- Glorious Mysteries: Wednesdays and Sundays

## “INTENTIONS”

It is quite common for Christians to use the Rosary as a means of praying for particular people or special needs. The leader announces the forthcoming Mystery like this:

“The third Glorious Mystery: The Coming of the Holy Spirit. We offer this Mystery for all preachers of the Gospel, especially those who are labouring in poverty-stricken countries. *(Pause)* Our Father, who art in heaven . . .”

or

“The fifth Luminous Mystery: The Institution of the Eucharist. We offer this Mystery for those who at this time are preparing for their first Holy Communion. *(Pause)* Our Father, who art in heaven . . .”

When we pray the Rosary privately, we can offer each of the Mysteries for specific people in our lives:

## AFTER PRAYING THE ROSARY

It is an old custom to say these prayers at the end of praying the Rosary:

*All:*

**Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy;  
hail, our life, our sweetness, and our hope.  
To thee do we cry,  
poor banished children of Eve;  
to thee do we send up our sighs,  
mourning and weeping in this vale of tears.  
Turn then, most gracious advocate,  
thine eyes of mercy towards us;  
and after this our exile,  
show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.**

*Leader:* Pray for us, O holy Mother of God:

**All: 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,

hath purchased for us the reward of eternal life;  
Grant, we beseech thee,  
that as we meditate upon these Mysteries  
in the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
we may imitate what they contain,  
and obtain what they promise;  
through the same Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## GETTING STARTED

Why not go and buy a Rosary if you don't have one? You will be able to use it in so many different ways - privately, in a prayer group, or even when you are travelling. If you learn to pray the Rosary you will not only join yourself spiritually to the prayer life of literally millions of Christians all over the world, you will be following the example of many great saints down through the ages.

## The Society of Mary

Many Anglicans who honour Our Lady belong to **THE SOCIETY OF MARY**. Originally an Anglican society, this fellowship has included Christians from other churches for many years. The Superior-General of the Society of Mary, Bishop Robert Ladds, writes:

“Our Society seeks the glory of God revealed in Our Lord Jesus Christ, born for us as Perfect Man and Perfect God. Christ was given to us through Mary, His Blessed and Ever-Virgin Mother. As Members of the Society of Mary, we love and honour Her, who is shown to us in the Bible as ‘Blessed among Women’ and who was loved and honoured by Jesus.

“What does this mean in our everyday seeking to live out the Christian life and our calling? Our prayer and devotion to Mary constantly reminds that, through the Incarnation, Christ lives in us and we live in Him. This directs us to seek Jesus in worship; through a deepening of our spiritual lives; in our relationships with one another and with those around us; in every aspect and dimension of the world. We are made deeply conscious of our fellowship with another and, most especially, with the Communion of Saints and the great company of all who have gone before us in faith.

“The Society provides for us to meet together in friendship and enjoyment of one another’s company and mutual support. We come together in worship and so share in the ‘beauty of holiness’. We have the privilege of sharing our experiences and the good things of our beliefs with others.”

For further information about the SOCIETY OF MARY, go to the web site:

**[www.societyofmary.net](http://www.societyofmary.net)**

or write to the Membership Secretary at:  
7 Oaks Farm Drive, Darton, Barnsley,  
South Yorkshire S75 5BZ

Australians should email their Regional Secretary:

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