

## **HOW TO PRAY THE ROSARY**

When you look at the structure of the Rosary, you can see that it is truly a Scripture-based prayer, drawing especially upon the Gospels. The **APOSTLES CREED** itself, leads off the Rosary and is nothing more than a summary of the mysteries of the Catholic faith.

Each decade is preceded by the **OUR FATHER**, a prayer straight from the Gospels and the very one Jesus taught his Apostles when they asked him how to pray. It is the **MODEL OF ALL PRAYER**.

Then there is the Hail Mary (repeated 50 times in a standard 5 decade Rosary). This forms the main body of the vocal part of prayer (aka **THE ANGELIC SALUTATION**). The first part of the Hail Mary is made up of verses taken from the Gospel of Luke (1:28 and 1:42). At the centre of the Hail Mary is the name of **JESUS**, “the name which is above all other names” (Phil 2:9), He is Our Lord and Saviour, the “the Word made flesh”, the one whom Mary always leads us to, the one that her prayer the Rosary is designed to lead us to, so that we may make Him the centre of our lives and be filled with all the grace we need, just as she is full of God’s grace.

Each decade ends with the Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – suggesting that the whole Rosary is a movement towards praise and joyful union with the **HOLY TRINITY**.

## **THE MYSTERIES OF THE HOLY ROSARY**

Up until 2002 the Holy Rosary consisted of just 15 Mysteries, and then St John Paul II added the 5 Luminous Mysteries to bring the total up to 20 Mysteries. We now have 4 groups of 5 Mysteries. The 5 Joyful, the 5 Luminous, the 5 Sorrowful and the 5 Glorious. All of these mysteries are related to key events in the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Saviour. They are all significant parts that form the wonderful story of ‘Salvation History’, that is the way in which God has saved the world. They are the fulfilment of the **PROTOEVANGELIUM**, the prophecy of how God said he would save the world by sending the Messiah (Jesus), the New Adam, along with the help of the New Eve (Mary).

These 20 mysteries are like the highlights – the essential moments - of how the saving plan of God was played out and brought to perfection. The exact plan that God had in mind following the Fall of the first Adam and Eve. It is the greatest story ever told, and reveals the supreme love of God for us, who are the crowning of His creation.

As we contemplate each of these mysteries, which St Pope Paul VI describes as being ‘**A COMPENDIUM OF THE GOSPEL**’ (a collection of highlights), we are entering what St Pope John Paul II calls: “**A DOORWAY TO THE DEPTH OF THE HEART OF JESUS**”.

We do this in the company of Mary, his Mother, and our spiritual Mother. whom he gave to us whilst dying on the Cross.

As someone has said: the Rosary is like: “Looking through the Holy Family Album with Mary”

Or, as St Pope John Paul II said: “With the Rosary, the Christian sits at the School of Mary and is led to contemplate the beauty on the Face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love.”

He also described it as: “a genuine training in holiness”

St John Henry Newman said: the Rosary: “enables you to hold our entire faith in the hand”

It’s also been referred to as: “Jigsaw pieces that make up the Picture of Salvation.”

As: “David’s Sling” that slays ‘Goliath’ problems

And: “the story of Jesus and Mary’s ‘YES’ to the Father”

Pope Leo XIII said it is: "an effective spiritual weapon against evils afflicting society.”

### THE CONTEMPLATIVE ELEMENT OF THE ROSARY – HOW TO DO IT

Whilst we are reciting the vocal prayers: the Our Fathers, the Hail Marys and the Glory Be’s, we are meant to focus our minds on and CONTEMPLATE upon whatever mystery we are praying.

This is what some people find difficult to do. When you first start learning and trying to contemplate, it isn’t easy. It takes practise. But like most things, the more you do it the easier it gets. The following two explanations are helpful in understanding the way the vocal prayers are able to be combined with the contemplation of the mysteries:

Fr Patrick Gaffney a Montfort priest and Biblical scholar says: “The Lord’s prayer, Hail Mary and Glory be... form the background music, or the body of the Rosary, creating a peaceful, prayerful atmosphere; the soul of the Rosary is the contemplative immersion of the self into the great mysteries of God’s victorious love.”

In his book called “Doorway to Silence - The Contemplative use of the Rosary”, Robert Llewelyn writes: “You will be helped if you hold this picture in mind for all repetitive vocal prayer:

The words are like the banks of a river and the prayer is the river itself. The banks are necessary to give direction and to keep the river flowing. But it is the river with which we are concerned. So in prayer, it is the inclination of the heart to God which alone matters. The words are there to assist and to support this fundamental need. They are the framework in which the prayer is held.

As the river moves into the sea, the banks drop away. So too, as we move into a deeper sense of God’s presence the words fall away and, we shall be left in silence in the ocean of God’s love.”

Last week I shared St Louis Marie de Montfort's list of 7 Benefits that come to those who pray the Rosary and the first one was:

IT GRADUALLY GIVES US A PERFECT KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST

This is what the Rosary is all about. I've said it before. It's simple:

It's about: Getting **to know** Jesus – not **to know of** him or **to know about** him,  
BUT **TO KNOW** Him

To have a real relationship with him.

It's not just academic, intellectual, head knowledge.

but experiential, relational, heart to heart knowledge.

Our Parish Mission statement is: **“Bringing people closer to Jesus Christ in hope and joy.”**

We can't really do that unless we have a 'close' relationship with him ourselves!

The Rosary is a great way of GETTING TO KNOW JESUS more and more.