

A Beginner's Guide to the Rosary

Who Can Pray the Rosary

Anyone who knows six easy prayers can pray a Rosary; you will also need to know twenty Mysteries to meditate upon as you pray. You do *not* have to be a Catholic.

The Order of Prayers

The Rosary begins with the Apostles Creed, followed by one Our Father, three Hail Marys (traditionally offered for an increase in faith, hope, and charity for those praying the Rosary), a Glory Be, and, if desired, the Fatima Prayers. Next come five mysteries, each consisting of one Our Father, ten Hail Marys, a Glory Be, and, if desired, the Fatima Prayers. Conclude with the Hail Holy Queen. Please say a few extra prayers after the Hail Holy Queen for the Pope.

Rosary Beads

If you do not have Rosary beads, it is perfectly okay to count with your fingers. Counting beads frees your mind to help you meditate.

Prayers for Praying the Rosary

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified; died, and was buried. He descended into Hell; the third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come 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 amongst 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

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 (Optional)

O my Jesus, forgive us of our sins. Save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls into heaven, especially those in most need of thy mercy.

Hail Holy Queen

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, 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 valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward 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 worthy of the promises of Christ.

(Optional)

Leader: Let us pray.

All: O God whose only begotten Son by his life, death, and Resurrection has purchased for us the rewards of eternal life; grant we beseech thee, that meditating on these mysteries of 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.

Prayer for the Holy Father (for private devotion)

Leader: Upon this Rock He will build His Church...

All: ...and the jaws of death shall not prevail against her.

Leader: O Mother of the Redeemer...

All: ...Living Tabernacle of the Eucharist, and Luminous Rose of Heaven, with humble confidence we ask you to bestow upon the Holy Father all the graces and blessings reserved for him by the Holy Trinity from all eternity. Amen.

Leader: Help his friends...

All: ...convert his enemies.

Leader: Saint Joseph...

All: ...pray for us. Amen.

The Twenty Mysteries

Here is a brief listing and description of all twenty Mysteries.

The Joyful Mysteries

The Annunciation: The Archangel Gabriel "announces" to Mary that she shall conceive the Son of God.

The Visitation: Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist.

The Nativity: Jesus is born.

The Presentation: Mary and Joseph "present" Jesus in the Temple where they meet Simeon.

The Finding in the Temple: After losing Him, Mary and Joseph find young Jesus teaching the Rabbis in the Temple.

The Luminous Mysteries (The Mysteries of Light)

The Baptism in the Jordan: The voice of the Father declares Jesus the beloved Son.

The Wedding at Cana: Christ changes water into wine, his first public miracle.

The Proclamation of the Kingdom: Jesus calls to conversion (cf. Mk 1:15) and forgives the sins of all who draw near to him.

The Transfiguration: The glory of the Godhead shines forth from the face of Christ.

The Institution of the Eucharist: Jesus offers the first Mass at the Last Supper with his apostles, establishing the sacramental foundation for all Christian living.

The Sorrowful Mysteries

The Agony in the Garden: Jesus sweats water and blood while praying the night before his passion.

The Scourging at the Pillar: Pilate has Jesus whipped.

The Crowning with Thorns: Roman soldiers crown Jesus' head with thorns.

The Carrying of the Cross: Jesus meets His mother and falls three times on the way up Calvary.

The Crucifixion: Jesus is nailed to the cross and dies before His mother and His apostle John.

The Glorious Mysteries

The Resurrection: Jesus rises from the dead.

The Ascension: Jesus leaves the Apostles and bodily "ascends" to heaven.

The Descent of the Holy Spirit: The Apostles receive the Holy Spirit in tongues of fire in the upper room with Mary.

The Assumption: Mary is taken bodily--assumed--into heaven by God at the end of her life here on earth.

The Coronation: Mary is crowned Queen of Heaven and Earth.

Mysteries for Certain Weekdays

Traditionally, many people say the Joyful Mysteries on Monday, the Sorrowful Mysteries on Tuesday, the Glorious Mysteries on Wednesday, and start again with the Joyful Mysteries on Thursday, the Sorrowful Mysteries on Friday. The Glorious Mysteries are then prayed on Saturday and Sunday. Now that the Luminous Mysteries have recently been added, the schedule is:

Monday - Joyful

Tuesday - Sorrowful

Wednesday - Glorious

Thursday - Luminous

Friday - Sorrowful

Saturday - Joyful

Sunday - Glorious

Try to place yourself "into" the scene of the particular mystery as you pray, imagining the sights, smells, sounds, and emotions that Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and other participants experienced during the actual events.

It is also okay to meditate on the meaning of the words of the prayers as you pray them, or even to meditate on the person for whom you are offering the Rosary.

Offering Intentions

Practically everyone who prays the Rosary "offers" the Rosary to God and Our Lady for an intention. Some people offer particular intentions before each decade. You can ask God to grant you a favor, heal a sick person, or convert a sinner. Some people offer the same intention every day--sometimes for years on end--especially when asking the Father for the conversion of a particular person. Intentions are as varied as the people who pray.

Ask for big and small gifts. Be bold! In this sense, the Rosary is an exchange of gifts between friends.

It is widely known that Our Lady answers seemingly impossible intentions to those who are first beginning to pray the Rosary. This is her way of drawing you closer to Her and to Jesus. If you are praying your first Rosary, or returning to the Rosary after years of not talking to Our Lady, ask for something big, spectacular, "impossible." She'll often surprise you.

Meriting a Plenary Indulgence

The Catholic Church, exercising its authority to "bind and loose on heaven and earth," and in perfect accord with God's Mercy, has set the following conditions for the granting of a plenary indulgence for those who pray the Rosary:

Be in a state of grace--that is your soul is free from mortal sin.

Be free from attachment to--that is, not in the habit of--venial sin.

Go to confession several days before or after praying the Rosary.

Receive Holy Communion on the day you pray the Rosary.

Say a prayer for the Pope.

By fulfilling these simple (but often difficult) conditions, you merit the grace to release one soul from Purgatory. While we are free to ask God to apply this grace to a particular soul, God can do as he pleases, according to His Will and Mercy. You can also ask God to apply this special grace to your own soul. A plenary indulgence will relieve the temporal punishment due to sin (it will not absolve the sin or cause the sin to be forgiven).

The Full Rosary

A "full Rosary" consists of saying all twenty decades, that is, all four sets of five Mysteries. A "Rosary" consists of praying five decades of one set of Mysteries. Many people pray a full Rosary every day; either by praying four separate Rosaries in the morning, midday, afternoon, and evening; or all twenty Mysteries at one time (it is not necessary to repeat the preamble--the Apostles Creed, etc.--between the four sets of Mysteries if one is praying a full Rosary. Conclude with Hail Holy Queen after the last of the Glorious mysteries).

The Family Rosary

The Family Rosary is usually prayed out loud after dinner or before going to bed. Family members can take turns "leading" the decades with one person praying the beginning of the prayers, and all others praying the endings. Some families announce intentions before they begin the Rosary; others take turns announcing special intentions before they begin the Rosary; others take turns announcing special intentions before the beginning of each decade. Many families add favorite prayers at the end of the Rosary, or ask favorite saints and angels to pray for them.

Rosary Novenas

Any time you pray any set of prayers nine consecutive times, it is a novena (*novena* is Latin for nine). There are many traditional Catholic novenas, and several involve the Rosary. The most common is to say nine straight Saturdays or for nine consecutive hours in one day.

The Most Powerful Novena

Perhaps the most powerful novena is the 54 Day Rosary Novena, which is a series of six consecutive nine day novenas. The first three novenas are offered for the intention, while the last three are offered in thanks to God in anticipation of granting the favor.