

How to Pray the Rosary

Every prayer and all twenty mysteries.

The rosary is a beautiful prayer during which we meditate on events in the lives of Jesus and Mary. Its purpose is to bring us ever closer to Jesus, Our Lord and Savior.

Who Can Pray the Rosary

Anyone who knows six easy prayers can pray the Rosary; you will also need to know the twenty "mysteries" of the Rosary to meditate upon as you pray. You do not have to be 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), and a Glory Be. Next come five decades, each with a mystery, consisting of one Our Father, ten Hail Marys, one Glory Be, and, if desired, the Fatima Prayer. Conclude with the Hail Holy Queen. After the rosary, you can include prayers for the Pope.

Rosary Beads

If you do not have Rosary beads, it is fine to count with your fingers. Counting beads frees your mind to help you meditate. Try to place yourself into the scene of the particular mystery as you pray and imagine the sights, smells, sounds, and emotions that Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and other participants experienced during the actual events.

The Prayers of the Rosary

The Apostles' 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 Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, and sits 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 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

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, and lead all souls to 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! Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God, That we may be worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray. 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.

The Joyful Mysteries

Traditionally, the Joyful Mysteries are prayed on Mondays and Saturdays and on the Sundays of Advent and Christmas. (But these and all the mysteries can be prayed any day of the week!)

The Annunciation: The Archangel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will conceive and give birth to the Son of God. Mary says "Yes" to God's will (Luke 1:26-38).

The Visitation: Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist (Luke 1:39-56).

The Nativity: Jesus is born (Luke 2:1-21).

The Presentation: Mary and Joseph present Jesus in the Temple, where they meet the aged Simeon (Luke 2:22-38).

The Finding in the Temple: After Jesus is lost for three days, Mary and Joseph find the young Jesus teaching the teachers in the Temple (Luke 2:41-52).

The Luminous Mysteries

Traditionally, the Luminous Mysteries are prayed on Thursdays. Pope St. John Paul II introduced these mysteries in his October 2002 apostolic letter Rosarium Virginis Mariae. (These descriptions are from the apostolic letter.)

The Baptism in the Jordan: Here, as Christ descends into the waters, the innocent one who became "sin" for our sake (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21), the heavens open wide and the voice of the Father declares him the beloved Son (cf. Mt. 3:17 and parallels), while the Spirit descends on him to invest him with the mission which he is to carry out.

The Wedding at Cana: The first of the signs, given at Cana (cf. Jn. 2:1-12), when Christ changes water into wine and opens the hearts of the disciples to faith, thanks to the intervention of Mary, the first among believers.

The Proclamation of the Kingdom: The preaching by which Jesus proclaims the coming of the Kingdom of God, calls to conversion (cf. Mk. 1:15), and forgives the sins of all who draw near to him in humble trust (cf. Mk. 2:3-13; Lk. 7:47- 48): the inauguration of that ministry of mercy which he continues to exercise until the end of the world, particularly through the Sacrament of Reconciliation which he has entrusted to his Church (cf. Jn. 20:22-23).

The Transfiguration: The mystery of light par excellence is the Transfiguration, traditionally believed to have taken place on Mount Tabor. The glory of the Godhead shines forth from the face of Christ as the Father commands the astonished Apostles to 'listen to him' (cf. Lk. 9:35 and parallels) and to prepare to experience with him the agony of the Passion, so as to come with him to the joy of the Resurrection and a life transfigured by the Holy Spirit.

The Institution of the Eucharist: Christ offers his body and blood as food under the signs of bread and wine, and testifies 'to the end' his love for humanity (Jn. 13:1), for whose salvation he will offer himself in sacrifice.

The Sorrowful Mysteries

Traditionally, the Sorrowful Mysteries are prayed on Tuesdays and Fridays, and on the Sundays of Lent.

The Agony in the Garden: Jesus sweats blood while praying the night before His passion (Matthew 26:36-56).

The Scourging at the Pillar: Pilate has Jesus whipped (Matthew 27:26).

The Crowning with Thorns: Roman soldiers crown Jesus' head with thorns (Matthew 27:27-31).

The Carrying of the Cross: Jesus carries His cross to Calvary where He will be crucified (Matthew 27:32).

The Crucifixion: Jesus is nailed to the cross and dies for our salvation (Matthew 27:33-56).

The Glorious Mysteries

Traditionally, the Glorious Mysteries are prayed on Wednesdays, as well as Sundays outside of Advent, Christmas, and Lent.

The Resurrection: Jesus rises from the dead (John 20:1-29).

The Ascension: Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus bodily ascends into heaven (Luke 24:36-53).

The Descent of the Holy Spirit: As the Apostles and Our Lady are praying in the Upper Room, the Holy Spirit descends in the form of tongues of fire; and the Apostles go forth and boldly spread the Gospel (Acts 2:1-41).

The Assumption: Mary is taken bodily—assumed—into heaven by God at the end of her life here on earth (cf. Rev. 12).

The Coronation: Mary is crowned Queen of Heaven and earth (cf. Rev. 12:1).

Offering Intentions

Practically everyone who prays the Rosary offers the Rosary 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 for the conversion of a particular person. Intentions are as varied as the people who pray! Ask for big and small gifts, and trust Our Lady to bring your intentions to her Son. In this sense, the Rosary is an exchange of gifts between friends.

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. Some families announce intentions before they begin the Rosary; others take turns announcing special intentions before they begin the Rosary; some 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 to intercede for them.