

The Mysteries of the Rosary

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IN THE ROSARY, MARY LEADS US TO HER SON AS WE MEDITATE ON THE MYSTERIES OF SALVATION

Our Lady of Guadalupe invites us to pray for one another in a spirit of charity, unity and fraternity. The rosary is always in season, for it helps us enter more deeply into the central mysteries of our faith that we celebrate in the liturgy throughout the year.

The rosary is always in season, for it helps us enter more deeply into the central mysteries of our faith that we celebrate in the liturgy throughout the year. With that in mind, I shall offer in the coming months a series on the Luminous Mysteries, given to us by Blessed Pope John Paul II.

Let us first recall what John Paul II taught us about the rosary itself. Toward the end of his papacy, he issued an apostolic letter titled *The Rosary of the Virgin Mary*. We can draw from it a deeper understanding of the rosary, along with a renewed resolve to pray it each day and to teach our families to do so.

CONTEMPLATING THE CREED

We begin the rosary by holding in our hands a small crucifix while praying the Apostles' Creed. This is a clue to the whole meaning of the rosary, a prayer that contemplates all that Christ did for our salvation. The Creed is not only a summary of the foundational truths of our Catholic faith; it is also a proclamation of God's saving deeds, revealed and accomplished by Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Praying the Creed, we should echo the Blessed Virgin Mary's song of praise: "The Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his name!" (Lk 1:49)

Next, we move to the first bead separated from the crucifix by several links. Here we pray the Our Father to become like the Christ of the Beatitudes. No one better than Mary can help us pray as Jesus taught, for she perfectly embodied the kingdom of God and shared most fully in the his saving mission.

There follows three beads grouped together, prompting us to pray the Hail Mary, in turn, for an increase in faith, hope and love — the theological virtues, which are given to every Christian in baptism.

In the rosary, we ask Mary's intercession to grow in these foundational virtues and thereby prepare us to encounter the mysteries of the rosary — events pertaining to the life of Christ by which God's hidden plan of salvation was revealed.

After the initial prayers and after each decade, consisting of 10 Hail Marys, we pray the Glory Be. This prayer expresses adoration, praise, and thanksgiving to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and serves to remind us that the mysteries of the rosary are the work of the Trinity. By meditating on these mysteries in the company of Mary, we are drawn more deeply into God's own life and love.

Following the Glory Be that concludes each decade, it is common to add the Fatima Prayer, given during the apparitions of Mary in Fatima, Portugal, in 1917: "O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell, lead all souls to heaven, especially those in most need of thy mercy." This prayer reminds us that we always experience God's love as mercy, as throughout the rosary we meditate on all God planned and accomplished in order to save us. In doing so, we are aided by Mary, the Mother of Mercy, as we ask her to "pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death."

TO JESUS THROUGH MARY

In many of these mysteries that we contemplate as we pray each decade of the rosary, the Blessed Virgin Mary played a visible role. In others, Mary is perhaps less visible but no less present.

But in each case, Mary leads us to Jesus. In other words, the rosary is a Christological prayer: It is seeing Christ through the eyes of Mary and entering into her memory, where the events of Jesus' life were kept and understood like nowhere else. In the rosary, we call upon Mary to help us meditate on the mysteries and events in salvation history that gave us new life in Christ.



With the introduction of the Luminous Mysteries in The Rosary of the Virgin Mary, Blessed John Paul II recommended a new daily pattern for meditation on the mysteries of the rosary: On Monday and Saturday, the Joyful Mysteries — the Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity of Our Lord, Presentation and the Finding in the Temple. On Thursday, the Luminous Mysteries — the Baptism of Our Lord, Wedding Feast at Cana, Proclamation of the Kingdom, Transfiguration and Institution of the Eucharist. On Tuesday and Friday, the Sorrowful Mysteries — the Agony in the Garden, Scourging at the Pillar, Crowning with Thorns, Carrying of the Cross and Crucifixion. And on Sunday and Wednesday, the Glorious Mysteries — the Resurrection, Ascension, Pentecost, Assumption and Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

After the final mystery, we pray the Salve Regina, or Hail Holy Queen. This prayer, which dates back to the Middle Ages, begs the intercession of Mary, our Queen and Mother, in a heartfelt plea. The rosary itself concludes with a prayer that we may “imitate what [the mysteries of the rosary] contain and obtain what they promise.” Conformed to Christ with the help of Mary’s prayers, we live in hope of heaven’s joy.

