

The Rosary and the Jubilee Year

Bringing people closer to Jesus Christ through His Church
Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth



On Valentine's Day, each year, millions of people give a rose or bouquet of roses to their spouse or partner expressing their love for them. In the third century, the early monastics would pray the 150 psalms found in the scriptures (today, also known as the Divine office.) Those who could not pray the psalms prayed a 150 'Our Fathers, also known as the poor man's breviary. The laity were given beads to help them count their prayers. In the 11th century, St Alvery began to pray 150 Hail Mary's, other Christians did the same. In the prayer, 'Hail Mary', we are reminded of both the events of the annunciation, the coming of the Messiah, and the incarnation, God becoming man, the fruit of Mary's womb. In the 13th century, St Dominic, the founder of the Dominican Order, had a vision of Mary who told him about the rosary and showed him a pair of rosary beads. He popularised the devotion and encouraged Christians to pray the rosary in small groups. In the 14th century, Dominic of Prussia, developed the Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious mysteries. In 2002, Pope John Paul II, instituted the 'Luminous' mysteries of the rosary which focus on Jesus's ministry on earth.

Why is this devotion of prayer represented by a rose? The rose is seen as a symbol of both beauty and purity, two strong images strongly associated with Mary. Just as a roses scent attracts us to its flowers, through our prayers, Mary attracts us to her Son. Each pray of the rosary is seen as offering Mary a single rose. When all 150 'Hail Mary's' have been completed, just as we give a rose to someone we love, our prayers become a crown of roses or a bouquet of flowers offered to Mary.

As we continue our journey through the Jubilee Year, the mystery of the rosary reminds us that the Jesus is the true Jubilee and help us reflect of God's saving love and his intervention in human history through the incarnation and the cross. When praying the Joyful mysteries, we are reminded that God becomes man and is proclaimed as Messiah. In the luminous mysteries, as we have seen, we remember Jesus's ministry on earth and how he calls us to imitate his love for God and neighbour, in these mysteries his divinity is also revealed. In the Sorrowful mysteries we remember God's great love for us is so great that he gave up His only begotten Son, and in the Glorious mysteries we remember Christ's victory over sin and death, and we also remember Mary's coronation as Queen of Heaven. While in the Jubilee of old slaves were set free from bondage and reunited with their families and homeland, in Jesus, we are freed from the bondage of sin and death. Jesus unites us to our true family, the family of God (the church), and to our true homeland, heaven.





At the foot of the cross, Jesus said to his mother, "Woman behold your Son." And to the disciple he loved, he said, "This is your mother." Tradition identifies the beloved disciple as the John the Apostle, and the term 'beloved disciple' is also seen as literary device to represent all followers of Jesus. Jesus not only entrusts his mother to John, but also to the Church. In the Old Testament, it was not the wife of the King who would sit beside the throne of the King, it was his mother, who would rule as Queen. In the book of Kings, Adonijah approaches Queen Bathsheba to ask the King Solomon, the son of King David, would he grant his brother the hand of Shunnamite in marriage. Bathsheba presents the request to Solomon; however, Solomon refuses the request as he sees this marriage as a threat to his kingship. In the same way, when pray the rosary, as our Mother and Queen, Mary's sits beside Jesus on his throne in heaven, prays for us and presents our requests to her son Jesus, also a descendent of King David. Like Solomon, Jesus hears our prayers and requests, but like Solomon, he only grants them according to his will and the will of his Father because only they truly knows what's best for us.

The rosary is also seen as a powerful weapon and armour, providing protection against Satan. In the Book of Genesis, after Adam and Eve have sinned, God turns to the serpent, Satan and says, "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." In 1854, when Pope Pius IX announced the dogma of the Immaculate conception of Mary, in the apostolic exhortation, "Ineffable God" he says that in union with Christ, through their indissoluble bond, Mary would crush the head of the serpent. It is through the power of Christ she crushes his head. Each time we pray the rosary, we invoke the protection of Mary and Satan flees. In 1917, Mary appeared to three children in Fatima, Portugal, Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco. She identified herself as, "Our Lady of the Rosary" and asked the children to pray the rosary to bring about peace and the end of the WWI. In the same way, praying the rosary can bring peace to our families. We can also offer the rosary for the souls in purgatory.

If we've never prayed the rosary before, how do we start? Someone gave me some great advice once, when embarking on something new, start small, do not aim too high. You could start by praying one decade of the rosary each day slowly building up to praying all five decades of a different mystery every. You could pray the rosary once a week and slowly build up to praying the rosary a few times a week or every day. When praying the rosary, you could have small altar with a cross, a statue of our Lady and some candles, to help stay focused during prayer. You could concentrate on the words of the prayers being prayed or you could focus on the themes of the mysteries being prayed.



Some version of the rosary also incorporates scripture reflections. You could also listen to voice recordings of the rosary such as Bishop Philip's rosary which can be found on the Jubilee webpage, or you could pray the rosary within a group or as a family. Remember the saying, "A family that prays together, stays together." During the month of October, by praying the rosary and by reflecting on the life of Jesus, the true Jubilee, let's ask that through the prayers and the intercession of Mary, our families and friends may always be kept safe and well, and that through the intercession of Mary, peace may be brought to our world.

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