

## HISTORY OF THE ROSARY

Prayer beads occur in many religions. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Bahai. Some scholars believe that the Hindus were the first to use prayer beads. The Jewish religion is the only major religion that does not have prayer beads. Even in the Christian religion, the Eastern Orthodox and Russian Orthodox churches use prayer beads. Since the 1980's, the Episcopal Church sanctions a 33 bead rosary for its parishioners.

Why do we as Catholics pray the Rosary?

Where did it come from?

The word Rosary comes from the Latin Rosarium, meaning rose garden or garland of roses. Saying the rosary is like walking thru Mary's rose garden.

The Rosary consists of 59 beads, a crucifix and a medal followed by a loop containing five sets of 10 beads separated by four beads that might be the same or different.

The clergy of the Middle Ages prayed the Psalter or 150 Psalms every day. Since most of the faithful were illiterate, it would be impossible for them to memorize all of the Psalms to recite like the clergy. The Our Father and Hail Mary were substituted instead.

Lady Godiva, yes that one, left her prayer beads in her will to the convent she founded in 1057.

Tradition holds that the Rosary in its present form was given to St. Dominic by the Blessed Mother in 1208. St. Dominic prayed to the Blessed Mother for help in ministering to his people. They were stubborn and wouldn't follow his lead. She told him that she wanted the people to meditate on the life of Christ as they prayed. This is how the Joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries were "born". St. Dominic's rosary consisted of the Sign of the Cross, The

Apostle's Creed, Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be. The Fatima Prayer and the five Luminous Mysteries were added by Pope John Paul II in 2002.

During the reign of King Henry VIII, the Catholic Church was banned and those who were caught practicing it were severely punished. In Ireland, the Faithful used penal rosaries, like this one which consisted of one decade of beads with a ring on one end. They would put the ring on their thumb, say the first decade and move it from finger to finger until the rosary was completed. It was easy to hide up a sleeve or in a pocket when necessary.

In Europe during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, women wore rosaries as necklaces. Many of the nobility had rosaries made of precious gems and the Our Father bead contained sachet to scent the prayer like incense used in church. In many countries today women still wear rosaries as necklaces. In the United States this practice was probably abandoned due to anti-Catholic feelings.

Men during this time period often carried a one-decade rosary like this one in their pockets.

The Blessed Mother has appeared to Bernadette in the late 1850's at Lourdes and to their shepherd children at Fatima on May 13, 1917 to encourage followers to pray the Rosary.

Saying the rosary has helped Christians in time of war. For example:

In Muret France in 1213, the Christian army prayed the Rosary before going to battle against the Albigoensians. After they were victorious, they build the first chapel dedicated to the Rosary in that town.

At the Battle of Lapanthro on October 7, 1571 the Turkish army outnumbered the Christian army 3:1. Praying the rosary brought

about a victory that included sinking 200 Turkish ships and killing 50,000 enemy soldiers. The Feast of Our Lady is celebrated on October 7 in memory of this miraculous victory.

In 1627, King Louis XIII asked his subjects to pray the rosary and all 15,000 of these troops were given rosaries and prayed several times a day before the day of battle against the Huguenots. They were triumphant.

When we examine the rosary, it is a gospel prayer to the Glory of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit:

--The Apostle's Creed focuses on God and our beliefs are clearly stated in it.

--The Our Father prayer is the prayer that Jesus taught us.

--Each decade ends with the Glory Be, the Holy Trinity

--In between we pray 10 Hail Mary's. When we do this, we invite the blessed Mother to pray with us and for us. She becomes our prayer partner as we contemplate the life of her son through the Gospel mysteries.

Pope John Paul II said:

“One cannot recite the rosary without feeling caught up in a clear commitment to advancing peace, especially in the Lord Jesus Christ, still so sorely affected and so close to the heart of every Christian.”

## Rosary Bibliography

O’Gorman, Bob. COMPLETE IDIOT’S GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING CATHOLICISM, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. New York: Alpha, 2006.

Scaperlanda, Maria Ruiz. COMPLETE IDIOT’S GUIDE TO MARY OF NAZARETH. New York: Alpha, 2006.

Tenny-Brittian, William. PRAYER FOR PEOPLE WHO CAN’T SIT STILL. St.Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2005.

Winston, Kimberly. BEAD ONE, PRAY TOO: A GUIDE TO MAKING AND USING PRAYER BEADS. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishers, 2008.

### Websites:

<http://www.how-to-pray-the-rosary-everyday.com>

<http://www.uga.edu/bahai>

<https://secure.www.pacifier.com/rosary-center.org>

<http://www.rosary-center.org>

<http://magnificatrosaries.com>

<http://en.wikipedia.org>

topics looked up:

Hindu prayer beads

Tesbih

Prayer beads

Prayer rope

Jesus prayer

Rosary