

The Rosary

In some form, the Rosary has been a part of Catholic prayer life for more than nine centuries. The Virgin Mary appeared to St. Dominic in 1208 and revealed the Rosary to him, asking that her devotion be spread throughout the world.

St. Dominic responded by preaching the Rosary, introducing it widely. After about a century, however, interest in and devotion to the Rosary declined significantly. After the Black Plague swept across Europe, the Mary chose Blessed Alan de la Roche to reestablish the devotion. A Dominican preacher, Blessed Alan also was visited by Jesus and St. Dominic, who challenged him to preach devotion to the Rosary.

In 1521, Another Dominican priest, Alberto da Castello, wrote a book he called “The Rosary of the Glorious Virgin Mary.” It marks the first time that the Rosary appeared in the form that it is prayed today.

The Rosary begins with The Apostles Creed, and is followed by one Our Father (generally offered for the intentions of the Pope), three Hail Marys (generally offered for increases in Faith, Hope and Charity), and one Glory Be. The opening is followed by five decades, which consist of one Our Father, 10 Hail Marys and one Glory Be. Today that Glory Be is followed by one of the prayers Our Lady provided to the three Portuguese peasant children more than 90 years ago during her apparitions at Fatima.

For centuries, three groups of Blessed Mysteries provided meditation for those saying the Rosary. Each group of mysteries focus on one period of Jesus’ life on earth, and each includes five mysteries – one for each decade of the Rosary.

The Joyful Mysteries (prayed on Mondays and Saturdays) cover Jesus’ early life and include the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Presentation and the Discovery of Jesus in the Temple.

The Sorrowful Mysteries (prayed on Tuesdays and Fridays) cover the passion of Jesus and include the Agony in the Garden, the Scouring, the Crowning with Thorns, Jesus Carrying His Cross and the Crucifixion.

The Glorious Mysteries (prayed on Sundays and Wednesdays) include the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Spirit, the Assumption of Mary into Heaven and the Coronation of Our Lady as Queen of Heaven and Earth.

In 2002, Blessed Pope John Paul II took the historic step of updating the Rosary in a letter to all Catholics. He presented the Luminous Mysteries (prayed on Thursdays), which focus on Jesus’ ministry and public life. They include the Baptism in the Jordan, the Wedding Feast at Cana (where Jesus performed his first earthly miracle by turning water into wine), the Proclamation of the Kingdom of God (also known as the Sermon on the Mount), the Transfiguration and the Last Supper during which Jesus established the Holy Eucharist.