

## ***That We May Imitate What They Contain, And Obtain What They Promise:***

### ***a consideration of the holy Rosary***

Seen from outside, Catholicism seems monolithic. Outsiders see a large institution, encrusted with customs and traditions, lists of things one must do, and must not do. It seems to outsiders as though things are pretty much the same wherever one goes, in every Catholic church.

But this is actually not true. The closer one looks, the more variety one finds – ancient liturgies derived from the major churches of the first centuries, for example (the *Eastern Rite Catholic Churches*, different in customs and liturgy from our familiar Roman Rite), and different customs and ways of doing things.

In spirituality, this is also the case; nothing is less monolithic than Catholic spirituality. In this, the Church resembles a vast cathedral: one enters by the front door, but soon realizes that what at first seemed to be one vast church is actually a whole family of churches under one roof, chapels to one saint or another, one devotion or another. Thus, in the Catholic Church one can learn about the different schools of spirituality: Benedictine, Cistercian, Dominican, Ignatian... Different ethnic groups cherish different devotions: Our Lady of Czestochowa for the Poles, Our Lady of Cobre for the Cubans, Our Lady of Guadalupe for the Mexicans and Central Americans. Over the centuries, Catholics have developed many, many ways of loving God and expressing our love for Him, like one vast cathedral, with its different shrines and chapels, all opening onto the main Altar. Different ways of expressing love, different expressions of the same Faith.

One cherished aspect of this richness is the holy Rosary. It is certainly the most widespread form of prayer in Christianity. It can be found throughout the Church, from Ireland and France and Scotland through Africa and the Americas to Asia. There are slight differences in the way it is prayed (the *appendix* to this article sets out the most common way the Rosary is prayed in America). The Rosary is a surprisingly flexible way of praying. It is not merely a long string of vocal prayers said according to a pattern. It can literally be a *school of contemplation*; approached properly, it offers us a vehicle for praying deeply and profoundly. In this article we will briefly consider what the Rosary *is*, and offer some concrete suggestions for praying it.

## ***THE ROSARY: ITS HISTORY***

There is a tradition that our blessed Lady appeared to St Dominic, the founder of the Order of Preachers (the Dominicans), in 1214 in Prouille, France, to give him the Rosary. Actually, no trace of this story can be found until about two hundred fifty years after Dominic died; but it is certain that the development and promotion of the Rosary owe a great deal to the Dominican Order.

The custom of using knotted prayer ropes to count one's prayers was known among the early Desert Fathers, ancient hermit monks. Devout laity learned this custom and practiced it with various prayers. During the Middle Ages the Rosary as we know it took shape. One inspiration for it was the Divine Office, the daily worship of the Catholic Church in which the one hundred fifty psalms are chanted in daily prayer services over the course of a week. The fifteen *decades* of the Rosary, each consisting of ten Hail Mary's (one hundred fifty Hail Mary's for the one hundred fifty psalms), were inspired by the Office and gave the laity a structured form of prayer for each day. As the monks meditated on the psalms and scripture readings of each Office, the laity joined their vocal prayer (Our Father and Hail Mary) to *meditation* on the Mysteries of the Rosary, fifteen events in the lives of the Lord Jesus and our blessed Lady.

The Rosary grew to be enormously popular. Its most popular form was the Dominican Rosary (with the fifteen Mysteries), but the Franciscans had their own form (the *Seraphic Rosary* or *Franciscan Crown*, with seven decades of meditation on the seven joys of our blessed Lady, and two additional Hail Mary's to bring the total number to seventy-two: the traditional number of years our blessed Lady lived here on earth).

In 1571 Europe was threatened by an invasion of the Mediterranean by the fleet of the Ottoman Empire, seeking to expand the Islamic dominion to Europe. Christianity had been shattered by the Protestant Reformation and it was with great difficulty that the Pope, St Pius V, cobbled together a coalition of different countries and their navies. A glorious victory was won by the Christian forces on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1571, which Pius attributed to the Faithful praying the Rosary throughout the Catholic countries. He established October 7<sup>th</sup> as the Feast of Our Lady of Victory (later rechristened The Feast of the Holy Rosary).

Pope Leo XIII (reigned 1879-1903) wrote no fewer than twelve encyclicals and five apostolic letters on the Rosary. Pope St. John XXIII (1958-1963) requested the Faithful of the whole Catholic world to pray the Rosary for his upcoming Vatican Council II. The devotion of the Holy Father, St John Paul II (1978-2005), to the Rosary was legendary; he was very frequently seen with his Rosary in his hands. Even if he were not actually praying the Rosary, just the act of picking up and holding his rosary beads was a prelude to prayer, to contemplation for him, and he sought to live always in the Presence of God.

The Holy Rosary has occupied a unique place in Catholic spirituality. Kings, Queens and peasants have been devoted to it; families made it their daily common prayer; it was part of the Religious habit of many communities, including the Dominicans and the Franciscans.

Thomas Merton, an American Trappist monk and well known spiritual writer, kept a Journal, and this Journal has been published in seven or eight volumes. It's an interesting mix of observations on daily life and spiritual reflections. At one point he was hospitalized in a Catholic hospital and found the experience of the chapel interesting: the Sisters, staff and patients had frequent devotions – litanies, novenas, etc. These things a monastery does not have; the focus is on the Mass, the Divine Office, and on contemplative prayer. But Father Merton, reflecting on his experience of the hospital chapel, saw the benefit of the devotions for others, although the devotions did not belong in a monastery; but he closed out his reflection by saying, emphatically, “I would never do without the Rosary.”

Which, coming from an author who was an authority on the contemplative life, I found very interesting. Clearly, Father Thomas Merton found the holy Rosary a great help to his contemplative life.

One moving example of the place of the Rosary in Catholic life comes from Japan. Foreign missionaries had been expelled from Japan and the Christian religion was outlawed throughout the country by 1620, with severe persecution and even martyrdom. Only in 1865 was Japan reopened to foreign influences, and the Paris Foreign Mission Society built a Catholic church. One surprising day, a few Japanese from a nearby village visited the church and one timid lady spoke to a Priest; from her he learned of the existence of what, upon his investigating, proved to be underground communities of Faithful Catholics (the *kukure krishitain*, hidden Christians). They had preserved the Faith through two hundred fifty years, without priests, without any outside contact, faithfully baptizing their children, observing the feasts of the calendar and gathering to pray the Rosary! But they were cautious, for the last Priest they had known gave them three signs by which they would know a true Priest when he finally appeared: *Do you*

*honor our Lady? Are you married? Do you honor our Father in Rome?* The Holy Rosary had nourished their faith literally for centuries, and after 250 years they were found still faithful, although some remote communities had changed over those centuries and chose to continue apart from the Church, following what they regarded as the religion of their ancestors.

## ***The Rosary and the Mantra***

The Rosary is a widely-beloved prayer used by millions of people, a hallmark of Catholicism. If you see a painting of a prayerful person holding rosary beads, you immediately think, “*Catholic.*” But at the same time, it’s important to realize that the Rosary does not stand alone: it is part of a very ancient tradition of prayer which is broader than the Catholic Church, broader even than Christianity.

In many Asian countries, the culture has been shaped by Buddhism. Monasteries play a central role in Buddhist culture. Monks and Nuns live in community, learn from masters of meditation, and practice what they learn. Many young lay people will flock to the monasteries for a period of months or even a couple of years, not intending to stay permanently, but to learn the traditions of Buddhism and especially how to practice meditation. The whole monastic community will assemble a couple of times a day in the meditation hall and together practice meditation for hours. Typically the monk will have a prayer word, a *mantra* which he will use to focus his attention, which otherwise would naturally wander.

In Eastern Christianity – the Eastern Orthodox churches, the Eastern Rites of the Catholic Church and other groups – monastic life likewise plays a central role and people turn to monasteries to find a spiritual master who will teach the art of prayer.

The *Jesus Prayer* is a venerable part of that Eastern Christian tradition (an appendix to this article treats of the *Jesus Prayer*, which can be of great practical use to any Christian trying to practice prayer). In its longest form – there are various ways to pray it – the prayer goes thus: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me, a sinner.* It is used in a way similar to the *mantra* of the East (although the Buddhist *mantra* does not center the person meditating on God: Buddhism is *agnostic*, it neither believes nor disbelieves in God)

This *Jesus Prayer* is Christian prayer, so I do not simply repeat a prayer formula and enter a trance. Christian prayer is a relationship. I center, quiet myself and focus upon God, trying to put aside all distractions, and use the words to anchor my prayer so my

consciousness does not wander. Western Christians will tend to strive for a wordless reaching inwards to God, resorting gently to the words when they become aware that the mind is drifting (the fourteenth century English classic, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, teaches this, and is widely read even today) whereas Eastern Christians will generally not let go of the words but constantly repeat them.

*In the life of Saint Jean Marie Vianney, the Cure' d'Ars, patron saint of parish priests: the story is told of Louis Chaffangeon, an elderly parishioner of Ars. Louis was a farmer, setting out each day from his home in the village to his plot of land. But he had the custom of stopping in the parish church each morning to spend a bit of time with our Lord. Well, one day, his neighbor, the farmer who tilled the field next to Louis, noticed that Louis did not show up for work all day, which was very unusual.*

*Returning home at dusk, the neighbor passed by the church . He noticed that Louis' hoe was parked by the door, leaning against the wall. Entering the church, he saw his friend Louis sitting there, gazing at the Altar with great concentration. "Well, what is this," the neighbor asked in amazement, "Have you been sitting here all day?? What have you been doing?" And old Louis replied, "I look at Him, and He looks at me, and we are happy together."*

*Old Louis must have developed a deep, simple prayer over the years, content with being in the Lord's Presence. Father Vianney would repeat this story often saying, "I look at Him, and He looks at me – my children, there is everything in that!"*

In terms of Contemplative Prayer, this is the way of all the world, it seems: those who practice prayer, in whatever tradition, know that human weakness leads the mind to wander. The *mantra*, in whatever form, is used to gently recall the mind from its wanderings.

I point this out because I think it is *essential*, if I am to really understand, and profit from, the genius of the Rosary. I am really missing the point if I think of the Rosary simply as a long, repetitious series of prayers said according to a fixed pattern, with a sort of vague focus on a series of *Mysteries* which are really scenes from Scripture, and the whole point being *getting these prayers said*. The Rosary is a school of contemplation. The vocal prayers, and their structure, focus as a kind of mantra, anchoring my potentially wandering consciousness. But the whole point is that the vocal prayers and their structure can lead me **into deeper prayer, much deeper than merely the words**; through meditating on the Mysteries, my mind anchored in prayer by the vocal prayers, I am led to contemplate God.

*I often think of the moment when He appeared in the Upper Room to the astonished disciples, huddled together in despair, the doors locked for fear, nothing in the past but the knowledge of their own failure in the hour when He was arrested, nothing in the future but their loss of Him like waking up from a dream into a deserted world. Suddenly, He is with*

*them, and His first words are not, "Where were you when I needed you? You let Me down!" His first word is, "Shalom," Peace.*

That's why I stress the importance of relaxing, resting in God, praying slowly and deliberately without my eye on the clock. Imagine you are sitting down to eat a nicely prepared meal -- think of when you have had good friends in to dinner for a special occasion. You have a few helps for the experience. The table is set nicely. There are cutlery and plate and glass, maybe even a sprig of green or a few flowers. All of these things are helps to my enjoyment of the meal, and I use them properly. But if I sit down in a rush, focused on the clock and everything else I have to do, gobble down the meal as fast as possible, even get anxious about which fork to use and distracted about whether I am eating too much or too little, the meal becomes a very different, less satisfying thing.

In much the same way, to rush into prayer with my eye on the clock (*I have ten minutes to get these five decades done*), distracted by details (*Oh, no, did I pray all ten Hail Mary's or did I skip one?*) is to miss the whole point. The structure of the Rosary is there to serve the prayer, not to become the most important, or a distracting, thing. If I turn away from this busy world to immerse myself in God, how sad if I turn my prayer time into a frenzied, busy mess.

*Anthony Bloom was a Russian émigré' who turned from being a medical doctor to become a Priest of the Russian Orthodox Church in France.*

*As a young Priest he was given the chaplaincy of a Residence for the elderly, a place which had many Russian émigré residents, and would go there once a week. One day an elderly lady asked to see him. She had a particularly perplexing problem. For years, she had been devoted to prayer. Day in and day out, hour by hour, whatever she was doing, she was praying. But recently, there had been a change in her life. Her prayer life seemed to have dried up; she felt tired and distracted, as though God was completely absent from her life.*

*Father Anthony asked her a few questions to help him understand better what she was saying, and then said, "Well, it seems to me that the problem might be that your prayer is too busy. You are always talking to God; what if He wants to say something to you? Can He get in a word edgewise?" And he made a few suggestions.*

*When he came to the Residence the following week for his regular visit, he saw this lady, and he was struck by how joyful and peaceful she looked. "Oh, everything went so well! The very next day I did just as you had suggested and it was all so different!" "Well, then, tell me about it," said Father Anthony.*

*"After prayers in the chapel and breakfast, I came upstairs to my room and briefly tidied up. Then, I just sat down in my easy chair, thinking how nice it was after all these years to have nothing I needed to do. And I looked around my room and thought how pleasant it was, with the morning light streaming in, and the icons with their lamps hanging in the corner. And you had told me, 'Obviously you can't just do nothing, so sit there in the Presence of God, and just knit.' And so I took up my knitting, and that is what I did. I thought, 'Here I*

*am in God's Presence,' and peacefully started knitting, mindful of His Presence. And after a while, the most wonderful thing happened. I just felt God's Presence, warm and inviting, come over me and around me, caring for me. And so, there I was, wrapped up in God, and He was no longer absent at all. He could not have been closer.'*

The lady in the Russian residence was praying the *Jesus Prayer* during all those years, and had to discover the same thing we must discover about the holy Rosary if we are going to pray it fruitfully: the structure is not an end in itself. It is a *vehicle* for prayer. It's interesting that when the great Carmelite reformer St Teresa of Avila was teaching her nuns to pray, she adopted the simplest possible approach. She told her sisters that the goal was to give God our whole attention; that God Who has always and everywhere been wholly present to each one of us deserves that we be wholly present to Him. She exhorts them to *look at Jesus*, to *regard Him*, to *gaze upon Him*... whatever prayer formulary they used, and she herself recommended the Our Father, the whole point was to be as fully attentive to Him as possible.

## ***Different ways of praying the Holy Rosary***

One often encounters in Catholic churches the communal praying of the Rosary, either before or after Mass, or during a Novena or other prayer service. Many Catholics find this a natural, nourishing setting for their devotion to the Rosary. Since the Rosary developed as a way for laity to join their prayers to those of the monks in the Divine Office, the customary way of praying the Rosary in common is fitting – it reminds us of the monks in choir.

Others treasure the Rosary as a quiet prayer for times of personal devotion, and it is indeed uniquely suited for this. To pause in the midst of a hectic, busy life; to recollect oneself, quiet down inside, then to give oneself over to the rhythms of the Rosary can lead to deeper prayer. Here, it is important to try to be free of the awareness of time pressing in. Don't begin your Rosary thinking, "Oh, I have to get these five decades over in the next ten minutes." Rather, quietly and serenely, begin your Rosary (refer to the appendix if you are not sure of the structure). Don't focus on getting the whole thing done; focus rather on praying it well.

Here are a few ideas about praying the Rosary.

- **You might find it helpful to pray the various parts of the Rosary at different times of the day.** People often complain that their days gets so hectic and unfocused. Sometimes, people complain that they get irritated, testy, nasty in

dealing with people, simply because they feel under so much pressure. Well, monks and nuns, praying the Divine Office, extend their prayer through the day in five, or seven, or even eight brief prayer services: singing hymns, chanting psalms, hearing readings, praying intercessions. They start their day with prayer; have breakfast, take care of personal needs, then come together in prayer; go to work, then come together in prayer; stop for lunch, then come together in prayer... Why not try this with the Rosary: pray two decades in the morning, one at noon or the early afternoon, two decades in the evening. Think of these prayerful interludes as oases of peace in your day. *Always have an intention* – for your children, or your neighbor, or that you may overcome a bad habit or a sin you keep falling into – and quietly, calmly, turn to prayer. You might find that the rest of your day is calmer, the craziness does not get to you as much. And having a specific prayer intention is a marvelous way of encouraging myself to get the prayer done!

- A method I find especially helpful is **to expand the Hail Mary with a brief acclamation reflecting the mystery**. This is my favorite way to pray the Rosary. Again, I quietly, calmly enter prayer, but during the decades, at each Hail Mary I insert after the Name of Jesus a brief reminder of the Mystery I am pondering:

**JOYFUL MYSTERIES** [prayed on Monday, Thursday; \*in some places, Sundays in the Advent and Christmas Seasons]

**Anunciation** “...blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus, *announced by the Angel.*”

**Visitation** “...Jesus, *for Whom you magnified your Lord.*”

**Nativity** “...Jesus, *the Word made flesh.*”

**Presentation** “...Jesus, *presented to the Father.*”

**Finding in the Temple** “...Jesus, *about His Father’s business.*”

**SORROWFUL MYSTERIES** [prayed on Tuesday, Friday; in some places, Sunday in Lent,]

**Agony in the Garden** “...Jesus, *alone in the garden.*”

**Scourging at the Pillar** “...Jesus, *scourged at the pillar*”

**Crowning with thorns** “...Jesus, *crowned with thorns*”

**The Way of the Cross** “...Jesus, *bearing His Cross.*”

**Crucifixion** “...Jesus, *dying on the Cross.*”



## **GLORIOUS MYSTERIES** [*prayed on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday*]

**Resurrection** “...Jesus, *risen from the dead.*”

**Ascension** “...Jesus, *ascending to the Father.*”

**Descent of the Holy Spirit** “...Jesus, *Who sent the Holy Spirit.*”

**Assumption** “...Jesus, *Who called you home to heaven.*”

**Coronation** “...Jesus, *Who crowned you Queen of heaven.*”

**[LUMINOUS MYSTERIES – these are not part of the traditional Rosary. They were added by Pope St John Paul II. Where they are used, they are prayed on Thursday].**

**Baptism of our Lord** “...Jesus, *baptized for our sins.*”

**Wedding at Cana** “...Jesus, *for Whom I do whatever He tells me.*”

**Proclamation of the Kingdom** “...Jesus, *in Whom the Kingdom has arrived.*”

**Transfiguration of our Lord** “...Jesus, *the Beloved Son.*”

**Institution of the Eucharist** “...Jesus, *the Living Bread from heaven.*”]

With a bit of practice, this becomes natural. It slows me down. During the first decade, the Annunciation, ten times I repeat, “...Jesus, *announced by the Angel.*” It helps keep the Mystery before my attention. During the second, the Visitation, ten times I pray, “blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus, *for Whom you magnified your Lord.*” The Rosary is a balance between praying the vocal prayers and meditating on the Mysteries. I find this method of expanding the Hail Mary to include the Mystery makes me pause, which helps avoid rushing, and helps me center on the Mystery being commemorated. It roots the Rosary deeply in the unfolding Mystery of Christ – I come back to Him again and again. It is helpful when I pray in other ways, too—if I am going to read Scripture, or pray intercessory prayer for someone, I will often start by quietly, calmly praying a decade of the Rosary in this way. It serves as a transition from the busy day into prayer, much like leaving a hectic street behind and passing through the vestibule into the cool, recollected quiet of a church; it helps me to gather my scattered wits, to focus.

- The **Scriptural Rosary** is another way of praying. It requires the accompaniment of a book or booklet. Ten Scriptural verses are given for each decade of the Rosary; before each Hail Mary, I slowly read a verse. The scripture verse helps one to reflect on the Mystery. This is a method which takes a bit of practice, but again it is a great aid to avoiding the temptation to rush, and it puts a good bit of scripture before one’s eyes as one prays. There are several Scriptural Rosary booklets in print, and I cite a few in the Appendix to this article.

- One can also **use Scripture with the Rosary** in different ways. For example, I sit down to pray my Rosary and begin as usual, but when I get to the first Mystery, the Annunciation, I turn to my New Testament and read the whole story, *Luke 1:28-38*. Then the Our Father and ten Hail Marys and the Glory be. When I get to the second Mystery, the Visitation, I turn again to my New Testament and read the whole story, *Luke 1:39-56*, and then pray the decade. And so on through the rest of the Mysteries. I might not use this method every day, but once in a while, or maybe for Feasts. But the beauty of this method and of the Scriptural Rosary is that, in prayerfully turning to Scripture, I am allowing the Word of God to nourish me. I am not simply reading Scripture; I am weaving the words of Scripture into my prayer. Saint Luke, in his Gospel, tells us *twice*, “But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart” *Luke 2:19*. I am imitating her; I am pondering the very same events as she, using the words the Holy Spirit gave us to describe them.
- I was once preaching a retreat for the novitiate of a community of sisters. It was Springtime, and the Sisters had the custom of taking advantage of the weather and their beautiful grounds to sit outside in a circle for their 3PM rosary. They had a unique method, of which I had never heard before: one of the Sisters (they took turns each day) would look at the Mass readings of the day, and pick out five sentences from the readings which stood out for her. It might be from the first reading, the psalm or the Gospel. And instead of announcing the traditional Mysteries at the start of each decade, the Sister would read one of the sentences she had chosen (*Therefore, my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices...*), and that would be the focus of the meditation for the decade. As someone encountering this for the first time, I was interested to see that it had the benefit of calling back to mind the Mass in which we had joined that morning; it wove the Mass and the liturgy of the day into our Rosary prayer.

In 1974, Pope St Paul VI promulgated his encyclical *Marialis Cultus*, on the veneration of our blessed Lady. In the section on the Rosary, he referred approvingly to the ancient custom I describe above, of expanding the Hail Mary after the Name of Jesus with a reference to the Mystery, and he also comments that new Mysteries besides the fifteen traditional ones could be developed for those who would find that helpful.

And how easy it would be to do that for oneself. All you'd need is your Bible, or just your New Testament. You might work your way through the Gospels, taking each story, each section of our Lord's teaching as the “Mystery” you will ponder for that decade. Or,

for that matter, you might take the Book of Psalms, and use a phrase or two, a verse or two in this way. What a beautiful thing it would be in the life of a Christian if his Bible became his prayer book! If he were to become comfortable with taking up God's Word often in prayer, making its text the very words of prayer.

So it is that the simple prayer of the Rosary is seen as a surprisingly rich, profound and flexible tool of prayer. It can be prayed with a group in church after Mass, or in the car on a family outing, or privately anywhere. I can pray it on my afternoon walk, or on the bus going to work. Only yesterday, the day before I am writing this, I was reading an article on prayer and the author rather off-handedly remarked, "The first Joyful Mystery [the Anunciation] makes a great Morning Offering." That had never occurred to me before, but how true it is: as our blessed Lady says *Be it done unto me according to thy word,*" I present myself to God and make a gift for Him of the coming day.

The holy Rosary can be prayed differently in different circumstances; it really is *the prayer for all seasons*, it can be the constant companion on my journey. Look for the opportunities the Holy Spirit points out to you to make it part of your life; it could be such a rewarding experience.

## *Appendix;* *The holy Rosary*

This is how you do it.

I have to start by saying that different Catholic countries have different ways of doing this (for example, in parts of Italy they start with the Act of Contrition on the crucifix). And you do not need any special equipment: you can start right now if you have **ten fingers** to count the Ave's. There are traditional rosary beads, more discreet finger rosaries... all helps to devotion So:

**[IN THE FOLLOWING PRAYERS, WHEN THE ROSARY IS PRAYED IN COMMON, THE LEADER TAKES THE FIRST PART OF EACH PRAYER, THE GROUP TAKES THE PART AFTER THE ASTERISK (\*\*)]**

- Begin with the Sign of the Cross *In the Name of the Father...*
- **On the crucifix:** *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;  
on the third day He rose again from the dead;  
He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;  
from there He will 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.

- **On the large bead:** *The Our Father*

## ***PATER NOSTER***

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.

- **On the three smaller beads:** *The Hail Mary three times*

## ***AVE MARIA***

Hail Mary full of Grace, the Lord is with thee.  
 Blessed are thou amongst 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.

- **On the large bead:** *Gloria Patri.*

## ***GLORIA PATRI***

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.

- **Each decade:** *Announce the Mystery; Our Father; ten Hail Marys, Gloria Patri*

- **On the large bead:** *Our Father*
- **On the ten smaller beads:** *Hail Mary*
- **On the large bead:** *Glory be to the Father.*

*[Many people, alone or in group, observe the custom of ending each decade, after the Glory be, with the prayer the Angel taught the children at Fatima:*

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.]

- Then announce the next Mystery and start with *Our Father*. Go through the rest of the decade as before.
- At the conclusion of the *last* decade (the fifth if you're praying five Mysteries, the fifteenth if you are praying fifteen, the twentieth if you're praying all of the Mysteries *with the Luminous Mysteries*), after the Glory be (and the Fatima Prayer if you do that), the Rosary concludes with the *Salve Regina*, all praying together. This beautiful hymn to our blessed Lady concludes the daily Prayer of the Church: each night during most of the Church's Year, at the conclusion of Compline, the night prayer of the Liturgy, this hymn is sung, the Church's farewell to our blessed Lady before bed.

## ***THE SALVE REGINA***

Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy.  
 Hail 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 towards us;  
 and after this our exile,  
 show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb Jesus.  
 O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

*Leader:* Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God

*All:* that we may be made 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 upon 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 Jesus Prayer: the Prayer of the Heart

*Strictly speaking*, this section does not belong in an article on the Rosary at all. I include it because I have so emphasized the point that the Rosary must not be approached as merely a long string of vocal prayers set in a pattern, with a few suggested meditation points included.

The *Jesus Prayer* is a very ancient form of Christian prayer. It probably originated among desert hermits in Egypt. In its fullest form: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner*. It is thought that the last two words were added later, but even today the form of the prayer varies somewhat from place to place.

**The classic work about this prayer is *The Way of the Pilgrim*. It is a Russian book of the nineteenth century, written in the first person. The author tells how he was at the Divine Liturgy in his Russian church, and heard the Reader chant the epistle, in which St Paul says, “Pray always!” (1 Thess 5:17). Puzzled, he left the church to consult with spiritual masters about what this meant and how one could do it, and one monk told him of the Jesus Prayer, and recommended some reading.**

**The rest of the book is our anonymous Pilgrim’s recounting how he adopted the life of a perpetual pilgrim, with no fixed abode, going where the Spirit led him and accompanied by his *Jesus Prayer*, with just two books: the *Holy Bible* and the *Philokalia*, He shared the wisdom he had gained with anyone who would listen, and learned a great deal from others about their prayer. One memorable conversation was with an Army officer whose work had him frequently traveling, but whose invariable rule was to read one of the four Gospels each night, in its entirety, before retiring.**

**But the main focus of the Pilgrim’s life was to engage in a continual pilgrimage towards God, and to pray the *Jesus Prayer* until it seemed to take over and repeat itself endlessly.**

In the Western Church, this focus on continually repeating the prayer is almost unknown. Western Christians tend to seek God in quiet prayer, entering into themselves to find Him, using the *mantra*, the prayer word, as needed to anchor the attention on the prayer and through it, God; but gently letting it go and immersing the self in silence until the attention wanders and the prayer is needed again.

We therefore see that the strong bonds of the Christian Tradition link the Rosary, the *Jesus Prayer*, and other schools of prayer and meditation. The goal is union with God, the very point of our very existence. The structure of our prayer, whether it be the holy Rosary, the *Jesus Prayer*, the Divine Office or whatever, must never become an end in itself. The structure exists to serve the goal: contemplation. *I look at Him, He looks at me, and we are happy together.*



Simon Barrington-Ward is an Anglican Bishop who has spent many years practicing and promoting the *Jesus Prayer*. He wrote a marvelous, lovely and simple book, *The Jesus Prayer: A Way to Contemplation* (Boston: Pauline Books, 2011).

It was something I found in this book that led me to include this appendix on the *Jesus Prayer* to my article on the Rosary. I had never heard this anywhere else. There is a strong tradition in the Eastern Church of using the *Jesus Prayer* for intercession: I use the text, reminiscent of the blind beggar Bartolomeos with its sense of helpless need before God, as I hold in my heart the person or intention for which I am praying.

But there is something else I can do, which I find very helpful in intercessory prayer: I can *insert the name* of the person for who I am praying into the prayer itself, very easily. Thus, I say *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on Charlie, a sinner*. This was something I would never have thought of but for Bishop Barrington-Ward. My custom now is to use my rosary beads: for someone for whom I am praying, I use the Ave beads and pray the Jesus Prayer for that person fifty times.

It is a helpful structure for my intercessory prayer, and it actually uses the baptismal name of whomever I am praying for. Quietly, peacefully I offer up the *Jesus Prayer* again and again, holding up to God the person for whom I am praying. What I have found is that it is an easy way to consecrate a portion of my daily prayer to intercession, it deepens my prayer as I wrap my intercession in quiet. I have found the *Jesus Prayer* beautifully complements the Rosary and its place in my prayer life.

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*The Scriptural Rosary*. Christianica Center, 2005. This was the first of the scriptural rosary books.

*Praying the Rosary Like Never Before*. Edward Sri. Franciscan Media, 2017.

*Bead by Bead: The Scriptural Rosary*. Meggie K. Daly. Misericordia Publishing, 2017.

***-Each of these books comes highly recommended by readers, provides useful background as well as suggestions for entering more deeply into the Rosary. These and a wide variety of other books on the Rosary are available through Amazon.com: just type "scriptural rosary" into the search engine. The reader comments are especially useful in making one's choice.***

*The Jesus Prayer: A Way to Contemplation.* Simon Barrington-Ward. Boston: Pauline Publications, 2011. ***A lovely, simple introduction to a way of prayer which has been so important to Eastern Christians, both Catholic and Orthodox.***

*The Way of A Pilgrim and The Pilgrim Continues His Way.* Walter Ciszek, Helen Bacovcin (transl). Image Books, 2009.

*The Way of the Pilgrim.* Gleb Pokrovsky, (transl). Skylight Paths, 2012.

***--The Way of the Pilgrim is a Russian text from the nineteenth century. It was written by an anonymous Orthodox Christian man who one day, inspired by hearing in the Scriptures what the following of Christ meant, left all his possessions and became a perpetual pilgrim, traveling from place to place, praying the Jesus Prayer and seeking out friends of God from whom he could learn. A classic. Two editions are given above.***

*To Know Christ Jesus.* Frank Sheed. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992. ***This is a wonderful book. Frank Sheed was a lay apostle who did much to spread the Faith. This book takes the reader through the story of Jesus as it is found in the Gospels, and provides background helpful for understanding and makes thought-provoking connections between the four evangelists' presentations. Available through Ignatius.com, this book is invaluable for deepening one's knowledge of the life of our Lord, and for meditating on his life in the holy Rosary. Obtainable from Ignatius.com.***