

THE ROSARY

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THE ROSARY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

“To recite the rosary is nothing other than to contemplate the face of Christ with Mary.”

Pope John Paul II

In his letter “Rosarium Virginis Mariae” of October 16, 2002, Pope John Paul II expressed his esteem for a method of praying that has nourished the faith of generations of Christians. The pope called on Catholics, and other Christians as well, to pray the rosary and enter “the school of Mary,” who knew Jesus Christ so well as His mother and who was His closest disciple.

Though it is not mandatory, the pope also suggested that five mysteries be added to the traditional fifteen. He called them “Luminous Mysteries,” or the Mysteries of Light, which include the mysteries of Christ’s public ministry between His Baptism and His Passion. While leaving the use of these mysteries “to the freedom of individuals and communities,” Pope John Paul suggested that they could help make the prayer more deeply centered in the life of Christ.

THE HAIL MARY

The Hail Mary evolved as a prayer from the devotion of medieval men and women who saw Mary, the mother to Jesus, as the great witness to His Life, Death and Resurrection. Its earliest form was the greeting made to Mary by the Angel Gabriel:

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Luke 1:28

Over time the greeting given to Mary by her cousin Elizabeth was added:

Blessed art thou among women
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

Luke 1:42

Finally by the 15th century, the remainder of the prayer appeared:

Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners
now and at the hour of our death.

The prayer calls upon Mary, full of grace and close to her Son, to intercede for us sinners now and at the time of our death. We share her as a mother with St. John to whom Jesus entrusted her, when on Calvary He said, "Behold your mother."

FIRST JOYFUL MYSTERY

THE ANNUNCIATION

Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus."

Luke 1:30–31

MEDITATION

Nor was Mary afraid to do God's will. The angel left her, but she was not afraid, even as she faced Joseph's initial doubt, even though she did not fully understand it all. She trusted even through the birth in a poor stable, through the silent years at Nazareth, the mysterious years of Jesus' ministry and the darkest hours of His passion and death. Mary believed God's purpose for her, even though she did not always understand.

One Our Father, ten Hail Marys and one Glory Be to the Father.



Giuseppe Cesari (1617 – 1682). *The Transfiguration*,
Ferens Art Gallery, Hull City Museums and Art Galleries,
Hull City, England

FOURTH LUMINOUS MYSTERY THE TRANSFIGURATION

About eight days after he said this, he took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white.

Luke 9:28–29

MEDITATION

On the way to Jerusalem where He would be crucified, Jesus told His disciples of His coming sufferings and death. They were deeply saddened. To raise their spirits, Jesus took them up a mountain and He was transfigured before them to show that God's glory endures, even in life's saddest moments.

Even now, God's glory shines in the darkest places of our lives, if we hold them up to the light of faith. Even now, we are given intimations, brief encounters, transfigurations of a lesser kind, as we confront the mystery of suffering.

One Our Father, ten Hail Marys and one Glory Be to the Father.