

The Rosary

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Introduction

There are many things the Rosary is not. The list is endless. One need only to point at something else in the room, however, most importantly the Rosary is *not* a trinket or a piece of jewelry. Although often bedazzled and glimmering, and sometimes even worn as a necklace, hanging from a pocket, or even wrapped around the wrist and hand...the Rosary is a weapon. In fact, the Rosary is quite often described as one of our *greatest* spiritual weapons. In Ephesians, we are told to put on the armor of God. (Eph 6:13-17) A helmet of salvation, a breast plate of righteousness, a sword of the spirit, a belt of truth, shoes of

readiness and a shield of faith. This type of armor isn't exactly what one can see or even what one might imagine someone wearing into a physical battle. Well, neither is the Rosary. The Rosary is very much like what I refer to as spiritual brass knuckles. The Rosary is like spiritual chain mail. Now these are just metaphors...I use them to create imagery. When the rosary is wrapped on one hand or worn around the neck with no context, it looks like jewelry. Now imagine it's a weapon...and its purpose seems a lot more than just decorative. Something very important to keep in mind is that we aren't always fighting against or protecting ourselves from something we can see. We are fighting a spiritual war. We are protecting and strengthening our spirit and faith. This being the case, we don't use this weapon or armor the way one would typically think. We don't wrap this around our hand and run it through our fingers to throw a punch. We don't wear this around our neck to withstand a blow in the physical sense. But we do so in a way we cannot see and it's just as effective. Perhaps even more effective. Before I explain how to use the Rosary as a weapon, or as armor for our souls, and for our faith against the forces of darkness that stand opposed to the light, I would also like to point out that it's a prayer. It's a meditation. It's a reminder. And it has a history. I'd like to tell you a little bit more about where the Rosary comes from. Who the rosary adores. And what we meditate on, but first who gave it to us.

History

The Rosary was first given to Saint Dominic de Guzmán in Spain in the early 13th century. The exact date may vary, but the most reliable source I have comes from St. Louis de Montford's book *The Secret of the Rosary*. (1214) Saint Dominic received the Rosary and its earliest form from none other than The Blessed Virgin Mary herself. It was originally given as a means of conversion for sinners and specifically the conversion of a sect of religious Christians called the Albigensians who were known to be heretical, which is a way of saying they were deviating from the faith originally made known through Jesus Christ and the disciples.

The Blessed Mary appeared to Saint Dominic in the presence of three angels, asking him if he was aware of which weapon the holy Trinity wanted to use to reform the world, to which Saint Dominic replied that no one but her - The Blessed Virgin, aside from Jesus Christ Himself was capable of knowing. Mother Mary then introduced the primary weapon as the Angelic Psalter, saying "preach my Psalter." Saint Dominic then went to the cathedral and began to preach. A storm came to fruition as he began to preach, shaking earth and darkening the sun. A picture of Mary exposed for all to see even moved arms visible to those there three times. This visible phenomena was used as a sign that quickly spread the new devotion of the Rosary and made it widely known. Especially after a prayer by Saint Dominic brought the storm to an end and after which he continued to preach. What he taught was the Rosary as handed down to him by The Blessed Mother Mary herself. Soon after, the Rosary was made in its very first form as well as the method of prayer and use as a visible tool, weapon, and armor to carry out the holy task.

First Form

In the days of Saint Dominic, teaching the Hail Mary, word for word, as well as the Our Father... prayer ropes and beads were already in use, usually to recite these pairs in large quantities, but not in the form that we have today. There was no Crucifix at the bottom or the layout of beads as we have it now, but 150 prayers were often said at a time in order to mimic the 150 psalms as they knew them. This method was still in effect around the time Saint Dominic passed and Blessed Alan de la Roche came into the picture. Blessed Alan was a Dominican Father from the monastery in Brittany. In between Saint Dominic and Blessed Alan a massive plague hit Europe. A lot happened that I won't get into here nonetheless...because of the events the most Holy Rosary needed a revival and our Lord, through the ever Blessed Mary chose Blessed Alan for the job. Father de la Roche revived the confraternity of the most Holy Rosary beginning in 1460 after our Lord urgently warned him to preach His mother's Rosary, stating to him that as he was not doing so already and knew it, that blessed Alan was re-crucifying Him by his inaction. Mary too, appeared and spoke to him in spite of his preaching on the Rosary, as well as Saint Dominic, and thus

from Mary to Saint Dominic (1214), to Blessed Alan's restoration (1460) the preaching of the Rosary continued. What we know as the Rosary was even up until that time known as the Psalter of Jesus and Mary. Given that the 15 decades (150 angelic salutations) match the 150 psalms, and those who were uneducated were unable to recite the psalms, the Rosary was held to be equally, if not more, fruitful for those individuals as a means of prayer and worship. And still, a rope of beads without their current form was often seen as more useful than the psalms. The psalter (Rosary) contains the word incarnate, whereas the psalms prophecies His coming. This is one reason of many.

It's important to note that as great of a spiritual weapon as it is, and one that produces much fruit, as I will begin to show, it is not a sin to fail to say the Rosary even out of sheer carelessness or laziness, as long as a person has no hate for it, it is a great spiritual tool given to us by the Blessed Mother and the Lord Himself, but one does not sin by omitting it alone.

As the times changed, as all things tend to do when dealing with things of human nature, such as the way of speech, what Blessed Alan re-introduced as the Angelic Psalter, the people now call the Rosary, which means crown of roses. The understanding was that by saying the Rosary devoutly, a crown of roses was placed upon the heads of both Jesus and Mary, roses that would never fade, roses that would never die, roses that could never change. Mary herself has appeared to many after such a change of name making known to them that every time they say a Hail Mary, she is given a rose and completion of the Rosary makes a crown which is placed upon her head. This confirmation of the Rosary and its spiritual fruit have been recorded by many and in many ways, all making it quite clear that a Rosary completed is a large crown of roses and a Rosary of even five decades is a small crown placed by us on both Mary and Jesus's head. After the Blessed Alan passed there were other others. Blessed Thomas of St. John, Alfonsis and King of Leon and Galacia are just two of which I'll name. Alfonsis, who was a king, always wore his Rosary in plain sight

and even though he never actually prayed it, by sight alone inspired so many others to do so. This is how even visually the sight of a beautiful Rosary can impact others, however he did fall ill, and almost died, to which Mary conveyed to him that simply by wearing the Rosary, so many had been prayed, and the balance of prayers said outweighed his sins and that great Grace had been obtained. He was allowed to live and lifted from the vision, he went on to preach and even pray the Rosary himself. Blessed Thomas had a similar experience that I won't get into now. Fast forward to 1569, Pope Pius the Fifth established the core prayers as well as the 15 decades through the papal bull. Still, the Rosaries consisted of loops of cord and beads that often lacked what we would see in our modern Rosaries, such as the tail with the Crucifix attached. Then, in the late 16th and 17th centuries, our standard design became known. This version contained the Crucifix with 5 extra beads leading up to the main loop. In 2002 Pope John Paul the Second began to teach an optional and additional set of five decades that did not alter the physical layout of the beads and so we have a modern day Rosary. A Crucifix, a bead, three more beads and another bead going up to a loop, consisting of 10 beads, a single bead, 10 beads, another single, 10 more, single, 10 more, single, and 10 more completing the loop. Some Rosaries have an additional bead or medallion that lies above the five beads of the tail and at the base of the loop depending on how a person prays the Rosary. Sometimes it serves a purpose and other times it's merely decorative or for structural integrity. I have seen and used many and some have the additional bead and others don't. This leads into how One can pray the rosary in which prayers it consists of. There are basics, and those are most important and often less confusing, so let's start there.

How To Pray

There are many methods for praying the Rosary, and I will not get into all of them here; however, all of the methods I know of, or have come into contact with, have at the very least all three of the prayers that follow.

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1. The Our Father
 2. The Hail Mary
 3. The Glory Be

That being said, there is usually or most always, before any of these prayers is even said, the Sign of the Cross followed by the Creed. So let's say four prayers.

As most of us already know, they're also two versions of the Creed; the Nicene and the Apostles. Either is suitable, but the version I have had the most contact with is the Nicene Creed. So for the sake of my demonstration, I will use that.

Before I get into the order and number of those prayers, I will point out that two others are used very often as well, but that the order or frequency of these following prayers vary significantly, depending on the method used.

1. Oh, my Jesus prayer (Fatima prayer)
2. Hail, Holy Queen (Salve Regina)

For the sake of this demonstration, I will at this time, set those aside so as to avoid undue confusion and focus on the basic prayers of the Rosary which most everyone knows.

Should you choose to learn those other prayers, or should Father like to teach that method or help incorporate them later on, they can always be added into their proper places, but for now we will stick to the first four. Once again:

1. Sign of the Cross followed by the Creed
2. Our Father
3. Hail Mary
4. Glory Be

Now that we know the prayers, here's the order.

Crucifix / Cross: Sign of the Cross, Creed (Nicene)

1st bead: Our Father

3 bead cluster: three Hail Marys

4th bead: Glory Be

10 beat cluster: 10 Hail Marys

Our Father and Glory Be

10 Hail Marys

Our Father and Glory Be

10 Hail Marys

Our Father and Glory Be

10 Hail Marys

Our Father and Glory Be

10 Hail Marys

This is often concluded with a Hail Holy Queen. (Salve Regina) This ends the first five decades. This is repeated twice more without the beginning 6 prayers on the tail, 150 Hail Marys, plus the three in the beginning. So 153 in total. This is a basic, and I stress the word basic, summary of the Rosary. The rest can and will be taught in time and although it may seem like a lot, don't be discouraged. It's meaningful just to try. Eventually, you may even find a method that becomes second nature to you. I personally say a Hail Holy Queen with each Our Father and Glory Be. Next, to step outside the basic prayers of the Rosary and reveal the bigger picture, it's important to know that each 10 decades of Hail Marys is a meditation on a mystery.. The first five sets of the 10 (decades) are the five Joyful Mysteries. The second five decades are the five Sorrowful Mysteries. The third five decades are the five Glorious Mysteries. That's why there are 15 decades in total, that's why it's prayed three times around, and that's why we offer both Mary and Jesus eternal rose crowns in full bloom. By praying the Rosary, we pray and meditate on the Mysteries surrounding them both, and we bless them both and in return, they bestow many Graces on us and our

intention, which leads me to my next point. How do we offer up an intention before, and while praying the Rosary?

Intentions Before and During

Before each decade of Hail Marys, a mystery is announced. Not only can you offer up an intention before even starting the Rosary, but you can also offer up an intention before each individual mystery or decade. The intention before starting is pretty self-explanatory. Go into the prayer with a specific intention in mind. It can be anything, even repose for the soul of a loved one or peace of mind. I mentioned before how each decade is a meditation on a mystery, 15 in total, three sets of five...

Five Joyful

1. The Annunciation - Gabriel visits Mary to tell her she will conceive
2. The Visitation - Mary visits Elizabeth while both are pregnant; Mary with Jesus, Elizabeth with John the Baptist
3. The Nativity - the birth of our Lord, laid in a manger
4. The Presentation - Jesus presented in the temple to Simeon
5. The Finding - Jesus found in the temple after three days by Joseph and Mary

Five Sorrowful

1. Agony in the Garden - Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane before his betrayal
2. The Scourging at the Pillar - Jesus whipped by Roman guards before his execution
3. The Crown of Thorns - Jesus mocked and crowned with thorns
4. Carrying of the Cross - Jesus carries the Cross and falls three times
5. The Crucifixion - Jesus is crucified in front of his mother

Five Glorious

1. The Resurrection - Jesus rises from the dead

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2. The Ascension - Jesus ascends into heaven
 3. The Descent of the Holy Spirit - Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to the apostles
 4. The Assumption - Mary is assumed into heaven, body and soul, after a peaceful sleep
 5. The Coronation - Mary is crowned queen of heaven and earth as Blessed Intercessor

Intentions Assigned to Mysteries

These are the titles of, and a brief description of the Mysteries. There are many other aspects of the Mysteries to meditate on. To assign an intention to or before the meditation of a Mystery, a person needs only to know or acknowledge a particular aspect of it. For instance, let's use the second Joyful Mystery as an example; the Visitation. In this Mystery, Mother Mary, pregnant herself with our Lord and Savior, goes to visit her elderly cousin Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist. An intention for this mystery could be to grant strength to help and minister to others even when we ourselves have a lot going on. For another example we'll use the third Sorrowful Mystery. The Crowning of Thorns. Jesus is mocked and humiliated by Roman guards and crowned with thorns when he deserves praise, thanks, and a crown of the finest materials. A fitting intention here would be for Grace to put up with humiliations or unworthy reception of ridicule without fight. These are but two examples. With this information in mind, you can start praying and meditating with the Rosary. Before you do, I'd like to speak a bit more on the benefits of praying it, and how those tie into the fact that it is one of the greatest spiritual weapons we have.

Benefits of the Rosary and Uses as a Weapon and Armor

The benefits of praying the Rosary are manifold. It is a destroyer of vice and a combatant against falsehood. It is a bestower of Grace Mother Mary herself made known to not only Saint Dominic and Blessed Alan de la Roche, but to many others as well that a person who

faithfully and devoutly prays the Rosary will receive Grace and protection. By praying her Rosary, we actively reflect on the Mysteries and the lives of both Mary and Jesus in such a way that mingled with prayer we put on such powerful armor against hell and the demons that it destroys vice, decreases sin and defeats heresy, while simultaneously causing virtue and good works to flourish to such a degree that we obtain an abundance of Mercy from God. We take time to withdraw from the world and its vanities and lift our thoughts and minds up to God in holy desire for eternal things and reflection. Mary, as our intercessor pleads to her Divine Son, our Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf, so we shall not perish. we entrust the chords of our life to the undoer of knots herself so we can walk the straight path of Christ. In time we become so attuned to higher contemplation and Grace, as to never be conquered by misfortune. We will not suffer an unprovided death. We are counted as worthy of eternal life and remain in God's graces. True devotion to the Rosary promises us we shall not die without the Sacraments of the Church. We receive the light of God and at the moment of our death we participate in the events of the Saints in Paradise. We are told by Mother Mary, that we will be delivered from Purgatory, having been devoted to the Rosary, and we shall merit a high degree of Glory in Heaven. Our prayers, intentions and requests will be answered, and our necessities will be aided by Mary herself. She tells us that she has obtained from her Divine Son, intercessors consisting of the entire celestial court for us during our life and at the hour of our death. This list could be expanded on and fill pages. This is a good time however, to get into how we can use it as a weapon and as armor, as well as when we should pray it.

When We Should Pray and How to Use It As A Weapon and Armor

If mass is being said in a language you don't understand, you could pray the Rosary. In fact, this was one of the ways the Rosary was prayed for a long time. If your mind is filled with all kinds of anxiety and you need something else to focus on, you can pray the Rosary. You can also pray it when your mind is too distracted during formless prayer and you want to visualize aspects or events in the Life of Christ. If you're given an hour of adoration, a free hour of prayer, or even five or 10 minutes and don't have time for the whole thing, every

effort to pray the Rosary devoutly has its benefits. By wearing it, it serves as a reminder to others. By wrapping it around your hand, it's a reminder to yourself. You can grip it in times of doubt, struggle, or even empty moments. Repetition breeds habit, and that's what the Rosary is. Eventually, the Rosary becomes habitual and something we don't want to be without. We grip onto it and run the beads through our fingers in the midst of spiritual or temporal anxiety. We meditate on the Mysteries and pray with our whole being to gain strength and insight. We honor both Jesus and Mary and bestow crowns of roses for them and in return they bestow blessings and Grace on us. When you are full of praise and worship and honor, pray the Rosary. When you are full of doubt and hurt and anxiety, pray the Rosary. When you are bored or resting, need to calm down or need to perk up, when you're awake or when you are lying in bed before sleep, pray the rosary. Stuck in traffic, waiting in line, or need patience; the list goes on. Pray the Rosary. And remember just carrying the Rosary on you or for others to see has its own purpose and blessings. But it's not just jewelry. It's *armor*. It's not a trinket. It's a *weapon*. The Rosary is a Sacramental. It's a sacred sign. It's designed to help the faithful by the gift of Grace and sanctifying them in many aspects and circumstances in life.

"Be strong in the Lord"

"Put on the whole armor of God"

"Stand against the wiles of the devil"

"Pray at all times in the Spirit"

(Ephesians chapter 6)

Amen.

