

The Feast of Our Lady of Holy Rosary

The purpose of the Rosary is to help us meditate on the great mysteries of the life of Christ and our own salvation.

For Catholics, **October month** is known as **Rosary month** and on October 7, the Roman Catholic Church celebrates the yearly feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. The development of the rosary has a long history. First a practice developed of praying 150 Our Fathers in imitation of the 150 Psalms. Then there was a parallel practice of praying 150 Hail Marys. Soon a mystery of Jesus' life was attached to each Hail Mary. Though Mary's giving of the rosary to Saint Dominic is recognized as a legend, the development of this prayer form owes much to the followers of Saint Dominic. One of them, Alan de la Roche, was known as "the apostle of the rosary." He founded the first Confraternity of the Rosary in the 15th century. In the 16th century, the rosary was developed to its present form—with the 15 mysteries: joyful, sorrowful and glorious. In 2002, Pope John Paul II added five Mysteries of Light to this devotion.

The feast of Our Lady of the Rosary was known for several centuries by the alternate title of "Our Lady of Victory, ". The feast of Our Lady of the Rosary was instituted to honor Mary for the Christian victory over the Turks at Lepanto on October 7, 1571. Pope St. Pius V and all Christians had prayed the Rosary for victory. The Rosary, or the Psalter of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is one of the best prayers to Mary, the Mother of God.

The purpose of the Rosary is to help us meditate on the great mysteries of our salvation. Pius XII called it a compendium of the gospel. The main focus is on Jesus—his birth, life, death, and resurrection. The Our Fathers remind us that Jesus' Father is the initiator of salvation. The Hail Marys remind us to join with Mary in contemplating these mysteries. They also make us aware that Mary was and is intimately joined with her Son in all the mysteries of his earthly and heavenly existence. The Glory Bes remind us that the purpose of all life is the glory of the Trinity.

Perhaps it's because the Rosary is such a wonderful way to spend time with the Lord. When we pray the Rosary, we meditate on the mysteries of the life of Christ. Like Mary, we store in our hearts the memory of the great events

in the Lord's life by which He revealed the Father's love and accomplished our salvation. As we address Mary, we seek her prayers, asking her to lead us to Jesus so that we may know her Son more intimately, so that our hearts may be formed in accordance with his heart, which we sometimes refer to as "a burning furnace of charity". The constant repetition of words helps create an atmosphere in which to contemplate the mysteries of God. We sense that Jesus and Mary are with us in the joys and sorrows of life. We grow in hope that God will bring us to share in the glory of Jesus and Mary forever. The constant repetition of words also improves our focus (concentration) and memory capacity. So, let us continue to pray the Rosary with full concentration focused for our own salvation and salvation of others.

When we pray the Rosary, we might ask ourselves how we can be those disciples to whom the mysteries of the Kingdom are confided. How can we daily kindle the fire of divine charity in our hearts? How can we daily spend time with Jesus so as to absorb in our hearts the mysteries of his life, death, and resurrection? How can we be daily formed as disciples capable of leaving our comfort zone and going forth, to the peripheries, in search of those who are poor, vulnerable, and searching for truth and love?

One time-tested and utter reliable answer to these questions is, simply, pray the Rosary... the Most Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In talking about missionary discipleship, Pope Francis once challenged his congregation. He pulled a Rosary from his pocket and asked the crowd if they also carried a Rosary with them . . . and most answered, "yes"! "But do you pray the Rosary?" Let us continue to pray the Rosary and be blessed through the intercession of our Blessed Mother Mary.

Be Blessed and Be a Blessing. Fr. Arul Yagappan, MSFS, M.A (Sociology), B.Ed.