

Beads or The Rosary

The use of Beads in Religion is older than Christianity. the word “*bead*” comes from the Saxon “*bið*.” (to pray). Originally many people remembered or counted their prayers by perforated beads. The arrangement of Beads called “the Rosary,” was made in the thirteenth century, long before the Reformation, when the Western Church was one. Probably no devotion has ever done more to teach the Mysteries of our Religion. The Rosary appeals alike to the most scholarly and to the most simple minded. Faithfully used it is the greatest help to holiness, at once a Confession of Faith, an Intercession and a Devotion.

Most of the Mysteries refer to an event in the Life of OUR LORD, a few, to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The frequent recital of the “Hail Mary” not only asserts belief in the fundamental doctrine of the Faith (the Incarnation), but puts into practice the Invocation of Saints, (embodied in the Creed’s assertion of the Communion of Saints), and addresses prayer to the Blessed Virgin (as the Mother of God, the nearest and dearest to the Diving Master), in the words of the Angel’s greeting.

The usual Rosary consists of a Crucifix, a Large Bead, three Small Beads, a Large Bead and then Fifty Small Beads, arranged in “Decades” or “Series of Tens,” each series being preceded by a Large Bead. The way to use the Rosary is as follows, holding the Cross or the particular Bead as one prays, in the order given and saying:

- *Crucifix*: In the Name of the FATHER, and the Apostles’ Creed.
- *1st Bead*: Glory be to the FATHER (and OUR FATHER)
- *2nd Bead*: Hail Mary. (Mediate on Faith)
- *3rd Bead*: Hail Mary. (Mediate on Hope)
- *4th Bead*: Hail Mary. (Mediate on Charity)
- *5th Bead*: Glory be to the FATHER.
- *Large Bead of each “Decade”*: OUR FATHER.
- *Small Beads of each “Decade”*: Hail Mary.
- *at the end of each Decade*: Glory be to the FATHER.
- *at the end of all*: the Prayer called “Salve Regina.”

In saying the five “Decades” or “Series of Tens”, a brief Meditation is made on either “*The Five Joyful Mysteries*,” (the Annunciation; the Visitation; The Nativity; the Purification; the Finding Our Lord in the Temple;) or “*The Five Sorrowful Mysteries*,” (The Agony in the Garden; The Scourging; the Crowning with thorns; the Carrying the Cross; the Crucifixion), or “*The Five Glorious Mysteries*,” (the Resurrection; the Ascension; the Descent of the Holy Ghost; the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin; the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin.)

While some Religious Orders and other say The Rosary over three times, in order to cover all the Holy Mysteries, the customary use is as follows:

- *The Joyful Mysteries*: Mondays, Thursdays, and Sundays (during Advent and until Septuagesima;)
- *Sorrowful Mysteries*: Tuesdays, Fridays and Sundays (from Septuagesima through Lent)
- *The Glorious Mysteries*: Wednesday, Saturdays and Sundays (from Easter until Advent.)

Many persons however, vary the sue according to their inclination. Few ever being the Rosary without coming to love it and to find it most helpful. The meditation upon the Holy Mysteries in order is in itself invaluable.

- from *The Practice of Religion* by The Rev. Archibald Campbell Knowles, D.D. published 1950