

## *Brief History of the Rosary*

The rosary is not a prayer to Mary, but a prayer prayed in honor of Mary. It is prayer directed to God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

The beginning of the rosary goes back to a time when the religious (priests and monks) would pray the psalms (150 of them) as part of the prayer of the Church. The people at that time desired to participate in the prayer of the Church, but many could not read or write, so they could not pray the psalms.

So, the idea of substituting the 150 psalms with popular prayers was thought of, e.g., Our Fathers, Hail Mary's, Glory Be's, etc. This allowed greater participation for all. The people could now actively participate in the prayer of the Church.

Later the idea of thinking about the Mysteries of the Life of Christ as these popular prayers were prayed was added. These mysteries are later grouped into sets. Today we have the following mysteries: Joyful, Luminous (or Mysteries of Light), Sorrowful, and Glorious.

Today a set includes one Our Father, 10 Hail Mary's, and one Glory Be. As each set is prayed, a person thinks about a particular mystery in the life of Christ. The mystery is announced at the beginning of each set and sometimes a short introduction to the mystery is read by the leader.

An introduction is added to the sets. The Apostles Creed, an Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, and a Glory Be. A concluding prayer is added – 'Hail Holy Queen' in honor of Mary. Some people add a special prayer at the end of each Glory Be. (called the Fatima prayer – a prayer given to 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."

The rosary, therefore, developed as a prayer for the people. It is a prayer that provides a way for people to participate in Christian worship and for people to pray together. It is a devotion that is important. It is simple, beautiful and powerful.

Mary did ask (in her appearances to people) that the rosary be prayed, because of its power to fight evil, especially, the Prince of Evil (Satan and his followers). The power comes from our focus on Jesus in this prayer. We fight evil by focusing on Jesus.

It is a prayer we can pray together, instead of the minister reciting prayers and the people passively listen. It allows for the people to participate actively.