

Praying with Mary to Christ

We celebrate October as the Month of the Holy Rosary, and on October 7, we observe the Memorial of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary. As we participate in this month, your children will be enriched by hearing how the Rosary developed.

Starting around the year 300, some Christians seeking a deeper connection to God left their homes to live alone in the deserts of Egypt. Isolation from the world and people allowed these holy men and women to pray constantly. They recited the same prayers over and over, and used pebbles or tiny pieces of wood to keep track of how many prayers they had prayed. In time, some of these individuals came together and lived in community, founding the early forms of the monastic communities that exist today.

When we pray the Rosary, we remember the journey of Jesus Christ.

By the year 800, monks in Ireland began praying all 150 psalms in sequence. When the cycle of 150 was complete, they would start again. The people were impressed by the holiness of the monks, and asked the monks to teach them to pray. The monks responded by instructing them to pray as Jesus taught us, asking them to pray 150 times the Our Fathers (three groups of 50) in a row. When the people found it hard to keep track of how many prayers they had said, they (like the desert fathers and mothers) used stones to keep count—transferring them from one pocket to another as they prayed.

Eventually, someone had the idea to string the stones together. By the year 1000, people were using stones or knots on a string to count their prayers. Rich people had strings of precious gems.

In time, people began to pray their repetitive prayers to Mary, the mother of Jesus. They started by repeating the phrase “Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee” fifty times. The shift in the prayers came because some people were afraid of God, who was all powerful, but they were comfortable with the gentle Blessed Mother. The rose became a symbol of Mary, and by the 1400s, the string of beads was called a rosary, or rose garland. Around 1550, the Hail Mary became



The form of the Rosary that we pray today took many centuries to develop.

longer, taking the form we know today, and the Glory Be, which is also called the doxology, was added.

The Rosary is a devotion that honors our relationship with the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is a form of meditation, allowing us to reflect on the life of Christ and deepen our faith. It is easy to pray, and can be learned by family members of all ages. When we pray the Rosary, we remember the journey of Jesus Christ and the role that his mother played in his life. As we meditate, we wrap ourselves in his story.

When we pray the Rosary, we give honor to Mary as the most unique human person in God’s creation. But we are not praying to Mary. We are praying with her, our partner in bringing our needs before God. We can see that in the words of the prayer as we entreat Mary to “pray for us, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.”