

AN APOLOGETIC EXPLANATION OF THE **ROSARY**

How did the Rosary develop, and is it a scriptural prayer?

“Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!” (Lk 1:28)

“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” (Lk 1:42)

“Henceforth, all generations will call me blessed.” (Lk 1:42)



Rooted firmly in Christian tradition, the private devotion known as the Holy Rosary comprises prayers and meditations on an entire series of events in the lives of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary that are explicit or implicit in Scripture.

The Rosary is one of the most recognized Catholic symbols. The Dominican Order helped to popularize devotion to the Rosary. It had long been the practice of people in the consecrated life to recite the 150 Psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours, but many of the faithful who were illiterate began the practice of reciting 15 Our Fathers (cf. Mt 6:9-13) to substitute for the Psalms. As devotion to Our Lady increased, some of the Our Fathers were changed to Hail Marys. Later, a meditation on the life of Christ accompanied the recitation of the prayers. The Rosary became a wonderful tool of faith and prayer, a simple means for people to pray throughout the day and to meditate on the events of our salvation in the life of Christ. (Cf. CCC 2678)

Although the Holy Rosary is associated with most closely the Blessed Virgin Mary and is indeed a Marian devotion, it points us directly to Christ. The Rosary is sometimes called the “epitome of the whole Gospel” because its meditations call to mind the key events and truths of the Gospel message. (Cf. CCC 971)

The Holy Rosary is a form of meditative prayer. It is among the forms of piety and popular devotion that extend the liturgical life of the Church. (Cf. CCC 1674-1675)

The meditations of the Holy Rosary and correlating passages of Scripture are as follows:

✠ *The Joyful Mysteries*

The Annunciation (Lk 1:26-38)
The Visitation (Lk 1:39-56)
The Nativity (Lk 2:1-20)
The Presentation (Lk 2:22-38)
The Finding of Jesus in the Temple
(Lk 2:41-51)

✠ *The Luminous Mysteries*

The Baptism of Christ in the Jordan
(Mk 1:9-11)
The Manifestation of Christ at the
Wedding of Cana (Jn 2:2-10)
The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God,
with His Call to Conversion (Mk 1:14-15)
The Transfiguration (Mt 17:1-8)
The Institution of the Eucharist (Mt 14:22-26)

✠ *The Sorrowful Mysteries*

The Agony in the Garden (Mt 26:36-46)
The Scourging at the Pillar (Jn 19:1)
The Crowning with Thorns (Mt 27:29)
The Carrying of the Cross (Jn 19:16-17)
The Crucifixion (Jn 19:18-30)

✠ *The Glorious Mysteries*

The Resurrection (Mk 16:1-8)
The Ascension (Lk 24:50-52)
The Descent of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-3)
The Assumption (Ps 16:10)
The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
(Rev 12:1-2)

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* addresses this question in paragraph 2708.

AN APOLOGETIC EXPLANATION OF
MARY AS THE MOTHER OF THE CHURCH

Why do we refer to the Blessed Virgin Mary as the “Mother of the Church”?

When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. (Jn 19:26–27)



The Blessed Virgin Mary, because she is the Mother of Christ our Redeemer, is likewise the Mother of the Church and, in a special way, the Mother of all believers as well as the Mother of all humanity.

The meaning of this title runs still deeper, however. By her complete obedience and cooperation with God, the Blessed Virgin Mary models for us perfect discipleship. She served as a key instrument in our salvation because through her Christ came to restore us in his grace and divine life. Her role in giving earthly life to Christ made it possible for us to receive eternal life through Christ. She is thus the Mother of the faithful “in the order of grace.” (Cf. CCC 963, 968)

The faithful of the Church in Heaven, in Purgatory, and on earth are members of the Mystical Body of Christ. The Blessed Virgin Mary, as the Mother of Christ, is the source of his human Body. St. Paul taught clearly that we are members of Christ’s Body. Thus the Mother of Christ is therefore the Mother of the Church and our Mother, too.

This was reinforced at the foot of the Cross when Christ entrusted his Mother to St. John, his faithful and beloved disciple; it serves as a sign of her Motherhood to all the faithful. In a still larger sense, the Blessed Virgin Mary is the mother not only of the faithful of the Church but also of all the living because Christ came in order to save every human person. For members of the Church, she becomes our partner in prayer, as the “prayer of the Church is sustained by the prayer of Mary and is united with it in hope” (CCC 2679).

We believe that the Blessed Mother of God, the New Eve, Mother of the Church (cf. *LG* 53, 56, 61, 63), continues in heaven her material role with regard to Christ’s members, cooperating with the birth and growth of divine life in the souls of the redeemed (*LG* 62). (Paul VI, CPG 15).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* addresses this question in paragraph 975.

Rev. James Socias, The Didache Bible, Midwest Theological Forum Press, Downers Grove IL, 2014, 2015