

# Personalizing the rosary

During the Middle Ages, as the monks would chant the 150 Psalms, the humble peasants, who could neither read nor write, would pray 150 Hail Marys – the equivalent of three rosaries. The rosary has always been the prayer of the humble, the lowly people, as Mary was, whom God has lifted up.

October is the month of the rosary. Recently someone said that they pray “Hail Jesus,” not “Hail Mary.” My humble reply would be: “Why not both?” As we hail Jesus as Lord and Savior, can we not also praise his mother? Mary brought Jesus into the world, and stayed with him to the very foot of the cross, and we pray that Mary will stay with us “now, and at the hour of our death.”

I usually use a ring rosary, and since I’m usually driving when I say the rosary, I put “intentions” on each decade, rather than meditate on any particular “mystery.”

The first decade I always offer as a prayer of thanks. Someone has wisely said that if you always want to be happy then always be grateful. One suggested practice is to ask yourself how you would feel if you suddenly lost all you had – your wallet, your glasses, your watch, your possessions, etc.- and then suddenly they all came back. How grateful we would feel. We have them all right now. Let’s allow ourselves to feel gratitude always.

The second decade I always offer for all those “who have asked for my prayers, for all those I’ve promised prayers, for all those in need of prayer.” I take seriously peoples’ requests for prayers. God takes our prayers seriously, especially when we pray with Mary to him.

The third decade I always offer that: “God will grant the fullness of life to the living and eternal life to the dead.” It’s my prayer for universal salvation. Nothing would make me happier than all people being saved.

I pray for the dead because, while Christian denominations may disagree on purgatory, it makes sense to me that there is some kind of “purging,” some kind of letting go of the things of earth and of this life, so that we can fully experience God’s life. I like to pray for those experiencing that transition.

The fourth decade I always offer for “the poor, the sick, the suffering, for all those in need, and all those who help them.” I think we need to remember all who are in any kind of need, and to remember to pray for the many caregivers in life.

The final decade I pray for my brother priests, deacons, religious men and women, lay ministers – for all who help to build God’s kingdom. God’s Kingdom will come. We pray that we are all helping to prepare for that coming – not adding to fear, but adding to love.

Between the decades I say the traditional prayer: “O my Jesus, forgive us our sins. Save us from the fires of hell (the powers of hell). Lead all souls to heaven, especially those most in need of your mercy.”

I also pray a personal prayer that you’re more than welcome to use:

“Lord Jesus, may all people be free from danger.

“May all people be free from suffering.

“May all people be free from fear.

“May all people be filled with loving kindness.

“May all people be saved.

“May all people be transformed, and come to the fullness of the life and the love of your kingdom, where you live forever and ever.”

While praying the rosary, I try to keep myself focused on sending love to whatever group I am praying for at that moment. To keep our hearts full of love at all times is to keep our hearts as Mary’s heart is – full of grace.