



The History of the Rosary

Long ago, faithful believers imitated the tradition of the monks by praying the psalms from the Bible each day. Not everyone could do this. Many people could not read because they were uneducated and others could not afford the cost of a hand-lettered Bible, which was necessary because the printing press had not yet been invented. Instead, Christians who wanted to make prayer an important part of their daily lives began to pray 150 Hail Mary's each day – as a substitute for the 150 Psalms in the Bible. As they prayed, they reflected on the events or mysteries in the lives of Jesus and Mary. As they reflected on each mystery, Christians prayed ten Hail Mary's. This prayer was named the Rosary, which came from a Latin word meaning "garland of roses." Praying the Rosary was like offering a bouquet of prayers to God in honor of Jesus and Mary.

The practice of praying the Rosary became popular in the Middle Ages. It is said that St. Dominic prayed to Mary often and asked her help in preaching the Word of God. Tradition tells us that Mary appeared to St. Dominic and encouraged him to preach about the importance of praying the Rosary. Dominic did what Mary asked. He became a powerful and inspiring preacher who founded a religious order, the Dominicans, devoted to Mary and to serving the people of God. More and more people began to pray the Rosary because of the Dominicans.

Another reason that the devotion of the Rosary grew in popularity happened in 1571. The Turks, who had conquered most of the world, were threatening Europe. Pope Pius V convinced the Christian leaders of several European countries to form one navy to fight off the Turks. It was almost a hopeless effort. The European navy was not as strong or well-trained as the Turks. On the day of the battle, the Pope, who was a Dominican, called upon the Christians of Europe to ask Mary's help by praying the Rosary. The Christian navy won the battle and Europe was saved! The Pope dedicated the victory to our Blessed Mother Mary. Later, Pope Gregory XIII named the anniversary of the battle the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. Today, on October 7, Catholics still celebrate this feast in Mary's honor.

Today, we Catholics pray the Rosary to grow closer to Mary and her son, Jesus. We honor Mary as Jesus' mother and our mother too in a special way during the entire month of October.