

16 What Is the Rosary?

Color each bead on which you say a Hail Mary blue. Color the beads on which you say the Our Father and Glory Be another color.

The rosary is a prayer in which we honor Mary, the Mother of God, and think about events in her life and in the life of Jesus. The rosary has been a popular prayer with Catholics ever since the twelfth century.

To pray the rosary, start by making the *Sign of the Cross*. Then take the cross in your hand and say the *Apostles' Creed*. On the first bead, say the *Our Father*. Say a *Hail Mary* for each of the next three beads. Then pray the *Glory Be to the Father* on the last bead. The rosary leader usually says the first part of each prayer and everyone else answers with the second part.

The main part of the rosary is usually joined to the cross and first five beads by a medal. Say the *Our Father* as you hold the medal between your fingers. Then move to the first of the ten beads of one side of the medal and say a *Hail Mary* for each bead. When you reach the single bead at the end, say the *Glory Be to the Father*. You have just said a decade (*decade* means ten) of the rosary.

If you wish to say the whole rosary, keep your fingers on the single bead and say the *Our Father* again. Continue as before.

Sometimes it is hard to keep your thoughts on the words you are saying. Try thinking about the event in the life of Jesus or Mary which the leader announced when beginning the decade. Or, just relax and let the words of the prayers which you are saying be the background to your experience of God's presence. The rosary is a way to help you become quiet so you can think about God.

