

"The Rosary is Hard!" - 5 Keys to Get Started

by Edward Sri

Many great popes, saints, and Christian leaders have exhorted us to pray the rosary. It's a powerful prayer, they say, one that can change your life, strengthen the family, bring peace to the world, convert entire nations, and win the salvation of souls.

But does the average person experience the rosary this way?

Many Catholics, unfortunately, have the impression that the rosary is not relevant for them. It might be a sacred prayer for very religious people—priests, religious sisters, and exceptional Catholics—but not for “an ordinary lay person like me.” Even some devout Catholics admit that they are a bit intimidated by this prayer. They have tremendous respect for the rosary, know it's important, but feel bad that they don't love it more. Many view it as the marathon of Catholic devotions. “I know it's an important prayer, but it takes fifteen to twenty minutes. I'm too busy. I don't have time for that.” “It's too hard to stay focused for that much time. I prefer shorter prayers.”

Some have questions about the rosary: Does all this attention to Mary distract us from a relationship with God? Why do we repeat the same prayers over and over? Are we supposed to concentrate on the prayers, the mysteries, or both? Still others think the rosary is just plain boring—a monotonous, dry, mechanical way of talking to God, not as personal and meaningful as other forms of prayer. “It's like taking the garbage out for your wife. You know you should do it, but date night is more exciting.” “Sure, the rosary might be good for you—like flossing your teeth—but it's not as interesting and meaningful to me as spiritual reading or adoration.”

Getting Your Feet Wet

If the rosary is not a part of your regular prayer life right now, it's easy to get your feet wet with this devotion. Here are five key things you need to know to get started.

First, we don't have to pray the rosary all at once. Sure, some people might sit down and quietly pray a whole rosary in one sitting. But we can also choose to divide it up, saying just a decade or two at a time at different points throughout the day: on the way to work, in between errands, in between meetings, while folding laundry or doing dishes. Many holy men and women and even popes have prayed the rosary this way and have found it manageable and fruitful for their busy lives.

Second, we can pray it anywhere! The rosary is like a portable chapel we can keep in our pocket and pull out anytime, anyplace. Whether we have a sudden, urgent situation to present to God in prayer or we just want to fill some of our day with thoughts of God, all we need to do is pull out our beads and turn to the Lord in this prayer. Indeed, the rosary is always accessible. We might pray it in a church, in our room, in our office. Or we might pray it in the car, on the exercise machine, in the grocery store line, or while cutting the grass or going for a walk. Bringing our hearts into the rhythm of the rosary is something we can do intermittently throughout the day.

Third, we can pray the rosary in different ways, customizing it to fit the needs of the moment. Sometimes we might focus on the words of the prayers, thinking, for example, of Gabriel's greeting to Our Lady as we slowly say with great devotion, "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." At other times, we might reflect on the mysteries of Christ's life, prayerfully contemplating scenes such as his birth in Bethlehem, his transfiguration, or his death on the cross, etching the Gospel on our hearts. At still other times, we might focus on the holy name of Jesus at the center of each Hail Mary, speaking his name tenderly with love as the pulse of our rosary.

Two and a Half Minutes That Can Change Your Day

Fourth, it's easy to fit the rosary into your schedule. Do you have two and a half minutes in your day that you can give to God? This is the beauty of the rosary.

If I need a quick pause in my busy life—just a two-and-a-half-minute break—I can pull out my beads and pray a decade in order to regroup with the Lord and be nourished spiritually. That's all a decade takes: one Our Father, ten Hail Marys, and one Glory Be.

I can do that easily, pausing for a moment in between emails, in the car, in my office, in between meetings, in between errands. I don't even have to stop some things I'm doing: I can pray a decade while cooking dinner, sweeping the floor, holding a baby, or walking to my next appointment.

If an urgent need comes up in the day—someone is in an accident, I'm about to begin a big project, my spouse is having a rough day, I have an important decision to make, I need to have a difficult conversation with someone, my child is taking an exam—I can say a quick decade right on the spot. In just two and a half minutes, I can offer a special gift to God—one decade of the rosary—for that particular intention.

Fifth, even if I'm not able to give the rosary my full attention, it's still worth praying. I might not always be able to completely unplug mentally from the concerns of the day. I might be exhausted, too tired to pray well. I might be distracted and unable to reach the heights of contemplation. But still, the words themselves are biblical and holy. Offering God a decade or two in the midst of my daily life gives him something beautiful, even if I give it without my full, relaxed, undivided attention. I'm giving God some space in my day and filling it with words of praise for him.

This is an excerpt from my new book, [*Praying the Rosary Like Never Before. Encounter the Wonder of Heaven and Earth*](#)