

Tips for Praying the Rosary

In his 2002 apostolic letter *The Rosary of the Virgin Mary*, Pope John Paul II urged the people of God to revitalise the rosary for our present age.

This page offers ideas for creating a meditative environment for the recitation of the mysteries of the rosary. Pick one or two and apply them to your parish or home setting.

Surprise us!

John Paul II urged young people to use the gifts and enthusiasm of youth culture to make the rosary their own. To those who objected that the rosary is hardly suited to the taste of youth, he replied that perhaps the objection is directed to an impoverished method. He pointed to the huge success of World Youth Days where faith is so vibrantly expressed through the gifts of youth culture. 'I am sure that young people will once more surprise adults by the way they make this prayer their own.' (RVM, 43)

A pastoral suggestion:

Put this challenge to some talented young Catholics in your parish: Present the rosary in a manner that 'speaks' to your peer group.

Visual, audio and imaginative elements can enhance our experience of the rosary.

- Highlight an icon of Mary and Christ using candles or a spotlight.
- The rosary is a 'compendium of the gospel' (RVM, 19). Visually highlight a bible with a spotlight/candle.
- Display a bare cross. With each new set of five mysteries, place a symbol on or near the cross; e.g. an image of the nativity for the joyful mysteries; water and wine for the luminous mysteries; a crown of thorns for the sorrowful ; a gold and white floral display for the glorious mysteries.
- Or make use of colour; e.g. drape the cross or icon with coloured cloth or bathe it in a coloured light - purple for the sorrowful mysteries, gold or white for the glorious, etc.
- Play soft background music conducive to prayer and meditation.
- Build up a collection of beautiful Marian hymns on CD or as music which can be played live. Integrate these into your rosary method.
- Choose one musical theme and repeat it in different shades and harmonies throughout the rosary.
- Read a suitable scripture reflection at the start of each mystery.
- Or invite two people (with talent!) to mime or dance a scriptural image.
- Invite a number of parishioners to prepare a two minute reflection to introduce each mystery. ('What do the events which this mystery describe mean to me?') Ensure that each person has a bible reference to assist their reflection.
- For each mystery, use an overhead to highlight a scripture quote/image.
- Prepare a Powerpoint presentation of text and images to accompany each mystery.
- Invite people to bring with them a photo of a person whom they wish to pray for during this rosary.
- Highlight the rosary as a prayer for peace in families. Invite people to 'bring with them' in their prayer the names and faces of loved ones who are experiencing a lack of peace.
- Highlight the rosary as a prayer for global peace by tailoring the concluding prayer (after the 'Glory Be') accordingly. e.g. 'May the light of the Spirit who guided Jesus throughout his public ministry shine on our efforts to seek peaceful resolutions to conflict.'
- Experiment with different voices leading the prayers: adults, children, male and female, different languages.
- Use silence creatively. Pause at the name 'Jesus' at the centre of the Hail Mary.
- Invite different groups in the parish (e.g. the Vietnamese community, the social justice group, the youth group) to run a rosary night in a style that reflects their cultural gifts and insights.
- Send people home from a parish rosary gathering with a simple reflection sheet that encourages the rosary to be prayed at home.
- At school, devote an art class or a drama lesson to creative expressions of the mysteries of the rosary. Incorporate some of the material into class/school prayertime.
- Ask the parish meditation group for tips on how to enter more deeply into the contemplative spirit of the rosary.
- While allowing for creativity, aim to keep the process simple and tasteful.

Continue this brainstorm, drawing on your own ideas, experience and creativity.