



Our Lady of the Rosary

The Mystery of the Rosary

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Chapter 2

ORIGIN OF THE ROSARY

A LONG-STANDING tradition puts the origin of the Rosary in the 13th century and ascribes it to St. Dominic, thought to have been inspired by the Virgin Mary. Modern historians speak more guardedly. They see a gradual evolution to its present form.

Concerning the Our Father, some authors think that less literate monks, unable to read or recite the 150 psalms of the choir Office, were expected to say as many Our Fathers instead.

With regard to the Hail Mary, part of it, the words of the Archangel, formed a popular devotion as early as the 11th century. The faithful prayed them in honor of the joys of Mary. St. Peter Damian played a large role in fostering the devotion. A further development occurred toward the end of the 13th century, when people began to pray the words of the Archangel before statues of Mary. They knelt or genuflected and brought flower coronets, especially of roses. These coronets, or "chapeaux," are thought to account for the name chaplet, and the roses for the name Rosary.

Somewhat later, to the joys of Mary were added her sorrows and her glories.

Not until the 14th century did it become common practice to include Our Fathers with the Hail Marys, for reasons which are not clear. About the same time, as



Chapter 4

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE ROSARY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

WITH the New Testament the theme changes. God's wondrous works are not those of temporal liberation for the Hebrew people, but those of spiritual liberation for humanity.

And the center is Jesus Christ.

It is he of whom the evangelists tell, and on whom the Apostles meditate.

It is he whom the first liturgical hymns acclaim, like the strophe of St. Paul which recalls three groups of mysteries in the Rosary:

Though he was in the form of God,
he did not regard equality with God
something to be grasped.

Rather, he emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.

Being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself,
and became obedient to death,
even death on a cross.

Because of this, God greatly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name
that is above all other names,



Chapter 5

THE ROSARY: CHRISTIAN PRAYER

MUCH talked about today are Oriental methods of prayer, especially zen and yoga. Some authors, convinced that they can be “baptized” and made part of Christian practice, actively promote them by word and deed, at organized conferences and in publications. Others, as well informed if not better, see a snare. In their view the essential of these methods cannot be assimilated by Christianity.

Actually, both sides in this debate have a point, depending on how the issue is defined.

1. If zen, yoga, and other Oriental methods are taken to mean nothing more than their *physiological and psychological techniques*, there seems no reason why they cannot be used in Christianity. They are a kind of bodily and mental gymnastics, which may be helpful to persons who cannot get their daily cares out of mind and need a crutch to collect themselves and fix attention.

At the same time, it should be noted that thousands of Christian mystics and ascetics have been the glory of Christianity, from the beginning to the present, without having to wait on these techniques to produce the same results.

2. If, however, one proposes to go all the way with these techniques, seeking the *mental void* preached