



Ask, Father James:

The crucifix on my Rosary fell off. Is the Rosary still usable?

Yes, it is still usable. A rosary is an aid to prayer, it is not the prayer itself neither is it a charm bead. However, it is advisable to replace the crucifix at the tip of the rosary bead because, on the crucifix, that is where we begin praying the rosary by making the sign of the cross and then pray the Apostles' Creed. The purpose of the crucifix on the Rosary is to help keep in mind that we worship Jesus Christ crucified when we are praying the rosary.

The mysteries of the Rosary contemplate Jesus Christ in memory of certain principal events in the history of our salvation. There are twenty mysteries reflected upon in the Rosary, and these are divided into the five Joyful Mysteries (said on Monday and Saturday), the five Luminous Mysteries (said on Thursday), the five Sorrowful Mysteries (said on Tuesday and Friday), and the five Glorious Mysteries (said on Wednesday and Sunday). As an exception, the Joyful Mysteries are said on Sundays during Christmas, while the Sorrowful Mysteries are said on the Sundays of Lent. The mysteries of the Rosary are based on the incidents in the life of Our Lord and His Mother that are celebrated in the Liturgy.

According to pious tradition, the Blessed Virgin Mary herself appeared and gave the Rosary to St. Dominic and told him that praying the Rosary will help overcome difficulties, especially attacks from the enemy and heretics. The Rosary is an arrangement of prayers consisting of the recitation of 150 Hail Mary's, arranged into groups of fifteen decades, with each decade being preceded by an Our Father and ended with the Glory be to the Father. Each decade is also associated with an event connected to the life of Jesus and Mary, and upon which, one is to meditate while praying on each bead.

The Rosary beads help Catholics concentrate on the mystery that is being contemplated while praying the rosary. Most often we pray the rosary as an entreaty to ask God for a special favour and as devotion to Mary. Our devotion to Mary, is more than anything else, to imitate her as a model of faithfulness and devotedness to God, especially imitating Mary's chief glory, her nothingness, of being the "Handmaid of the Lord," despite the assurance that she was becoming the Mother of God. As Thomas Merton says; "It is the faith and the fidelity of this humble handmaid, 'full of grace' that enables her to be the perfect instrument of God, and nothing else but His instrument."

There is no doubt that frequent recitation of the Hail Mary when praying the Rosary at home and in the church several times a day has contributed significantly to nurturing our Catholic religiosity. Using a string of beads to count and regulate contemplative prayer, is an ancient practice that became popular in the medieval era church. The purpose of the rosary is to aid in contemplation, a process to which the faculties of memory and the imagination are integral. Also, the purpose of the rosary is to be contemplative, by calling to mind the events in the lives of Mary and Christ, to have an encounter with the mystery of the Triune God that is spiritually transformative.

When Our Lady says "Pray the Rosary," she is speaking of what has been termed her Psalter, a word referring to the Book of Psalms, which contains one hundred and fifty Psalms of David. From the time of St. Dominic, "Mary's Psalter" was the 150 Hail Marys. In 1569 St. Pope Pius V, himself a Dominican, issued an apostolic letter establishing the fifteen-decades as the official Church-authorized Rosary. *Please email your Faith Questions to Father James at: frjowolagba@gmail.com*

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