October: Month of the Rosary

The association of the Rosary with the month of October began with Pope Leo XIII, who wrote in an encyclical letter in 1883, "we also desire that the whole of the month of October in this year should be consecrated to the Holy Queen of the Rosary" (Pope Leo XIII, On Devotion of the Rosary, no. 8, September 1, 1883).

Pope Leo followed up on this initial decree with eighteen more encyclicals calling for recitation of the Rosary by the faithful throughout the month of October.

In his October 2002 Apostolic Letter On the Most Holy Rosary, Pope John Paul II proclaimed October 2002 through October 2003 the "Year of the Rosary," marking the 120th anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's first rosary encyclical.

The Rosary is a scripture-based prayer that begins with the Apostles' Creed, a summary of the great mysteries of the Catholic faith. The Our Father, which introduces each mystery, is from the Gospels. The first part of the Hail Mary is the angel's words announcing Christ's birth and Elizabeth's greeting to Mary. Pope Pius V officially added the second part of the Hail Mary.

Before 2002, there were fifteen mysteries of the Rosary centered on the events of Christ's life on which to meditate. Pope John Paul II introduced five additional mysteries, "the Mysteries of Light," in 2002 in On the Most Holy Rosary. They are now commonly referred to as the "Luminous" Mysteries.

Traditionally, the four sets of mysteries: Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious, and Luminous, are mediated on specific days of the week. The Joyful Mysteries are recited on Mondays and Saturdays; the Luminous Mysteries on Thursdays; the Sorrowful Mysteries on Tuesdays and Fridays; and the Glorious Mysteries on Wednesdays and Sundays.

The repetition of the prayers in the Rosary is meant to lead one into restful and contemplative prayer related to each mystery. The gentle repetition of the words helps us to enter into the silence of our hearts, where Christ's spirit dwells. The Rosary can be prayed privately or with a group.

6. FIVE DECADES

5. GLORY BE

4. 3 BEADS

3. FIRST BEAD

2. CRUCIFIX

1. SIGN OF THE CROSS