

KEY CONCEPTS

POPE	The Bishop of Rome, head of the Catholic Church.	ICTHUS	The Greek word for fish, ICTHUS, made an acronym for Christ. Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Saviour.
INFALLIBLE	Without error. The belief that, under strict conditions, the teaching of the Pope on behalf of the Church is protected from error.	CHI RHO	A Christian symbol consisting of the Greek letters Chi (X) and Rho (P), which are the first two letters of ‘Christ’ in Greek.
VENERATION	Regarding something with utmost respect and reverence; honouring, but not worshipping, a saint or a very holy person.	RETREATS	Taking time out of ordinary daily life to focus on God, religion and spirituality; taking time to communicate with God through prayer and reflection.
RELIGIOUS VOWS	Sacred promises of poverty, chastity and obedience, made by monks and nuns.	APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION	The line of Catholic bishops, going back to Jesus’ apostles.
A RELIGIOUS	A person who has taken the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.	IMMACULATE CONCEPTION	The belief that God preserved the Virgin Mary from Original Sin from the moment of her conception.
THEOTOKOS	‘God-bearer’; the title given to the Virgin Mary, bearer of Christ.	CRUCIFIX	A representation of the cross with a figure of the crucified Jesus on it.

ROSARY BEADS

A Rosary is a string of beads with a crucifix. A short string of beads is attached to a crucifix which leads to a large circular section of beads, five sets of one large bead and ten smaller beads, called decades. The Rosary is mainly used by Catholics to keep count through a series of prayers. When Catholics pray the Rosary, they think about (meditate on) events in the life of Jesus.

HOW TO PRAY THE ROSARY

The Rosary begins with the Sign of the Cross and an Apostles’ Creed, while holding the crucifix. Then the Our Father will be recited, followed by one Hail Mary prayer for each of the next three smaller beads. Each decade begins with a Glory Be and Our Father, before reciting ten Hail Mary prayers, one for each bead. During each decade, Catholics will think carefully about one of the Mysteries. There are twenty mysteries in total, split into four groups: the Joyful Mysteries, the Sorrowful Mysteries, the Glorious Mysteries and the Luminous Mysteries. Each group of Mysteries is prayed on specific days, e.g. each Thursday the Luminous Mysteries will be the focus of the Rosary.

The Rosary as reflection on the INCARNATION

The Joyful Mysteries (prayed on Mondays and Saturdays) focus on Jesus’ incarnation – when God became flesh in the person of Christ. During each decade, the believer will focus on five specific events associated with his birth and childhood. For example, the Annunciation, the Nativity and the Presentation in the Temple. Some people find it helpful to use a leaflet with Bible verses or pictures related to the Mysteries. The believer will think carefully about these events, and reflect on their importance and relevance in their lives. Spending time praying in this way means that these events become even more significant to the believer. Catholics find they can learn how to live as God would want through reflection on these events and observing how Jesus and Mary lived. The Rosary is a way of deepening the relationship with God and using Jesus and Mary as examples of Christian life.

The Rosary as reflection on the TRINITY

During each decade, the ‘Glory Be’ prayer is recited. This prayer makes explicit the Catholic belief in the Trinity. It outlines the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), as well as the omnipresent (always present) nature of it (“...as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be...”) Saying this prayer regularly and thoughtfully can remind worshippers that the purpose of their life is the glory of the Trinity, and that all believers are called to contribute their unique gifts and talents to reflect the love of God to all.

The Rosary as VENERATION OF MARY

The Rosary is very closely associated with Mary, the Mother of God. There are many occasions where people have reported seeing a vision of Mary, praying and instructing people to pray the rosary. For example, St Bernadette claimed to see Mary at Lourdes, where she taught her to pray the Rosary. Additionally, the Rosary is said to have been given to St Dominic by Mary in a vision in 1214. Therefore, praying the Rosary shows respect and honour to Mary, as she has instructed believers to do this. Additionally, the Hail Mary prayer is a central prayer of the Rosary. Some of the words of this prayer are taken from scripture, and it allows believers to show respect to Mary and to ask her to intercede on their behalf. When they pray the Rosary, they are thinking about the events in the life of Jesus, but with a focus on his mother Mary. They can also see, particularly through the Glorious Mysteries, how God rewarded Mary for her love and care of Jesus. This shows believers that they too will be rewarded for following the humble example of Mary.