

Rosary

Prayer beads can be found in many faith traditions and are used as a way to keep count of the number of repetitions, as is the case with the Muslim chaplet of 99 beads, or as a reminder of a specific prayer, as it is with the Catholic Rosary.

Today Rosaries are commonplace and many places sell “pocket crosses” or “pocket angels”, and WWJD (What Would Jesus Do) bracelets, all in the hope carried or worn with the hope of pulling us into a prayerful (or reflective) mindset.

In secular society groups and alternative therapies are using prayer beads and stones to help individuals deal with their problem as both the construction of the beads and the use of them in prayer or meditation have proven helpful. Tactile stimulation according to Basil Pennington, O.C.S.O., and author of Praying By Hand, “...helps our concentration.” and “While they occupy and integrate our external senses into our prayer, our mind is left freer to attend to its own level of reality.”¹

It is believed that in Christianity, the Rosary evolved from a simple stone. The first Christian documentation found of using stones to keep track of prayers was a hermit by the name of Abba Paul (A.D. 341). Paul would collect the stones for his prayers in the morning (all 300 of them), and as he recited the prayers he would drop them into his pile. Later, stones, berries, and bits of bones were also used as reminders of prayers and Psalms.^{2 3}

As a brainstorm, we offer a few novel ways to pray a Rosary that may be helpful.

- Pray for one person in your life with each bead.
- Repent of one sin in your past with each bead.
- Repeat a mantra that connects you to God, moving through the beads as you see fit.
- Follow the traditional method of praying the Rosary, but when you get to the beads used for the mysteries:
 - Pray a psalm for each one.
 - Move your way through salvation history:
 1. Creation
 2. Emancipation
 3. Exile
 4. Jesus’ ministry
 5. Life after the resurrection
- Be creative – let the Rosary beads move you toward prayer, however that works best for you!

¹ Pennington, M. Basil, Praying By Hand: Rediscovering the Rosary as a way of Prayer. Harper: San Francisco, 1991. 3

² The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume II, “The Rosary”

³ This Rosary information comes from Sarah Fredrickson, worksheet for Prayer Traditions, Spring 2006.