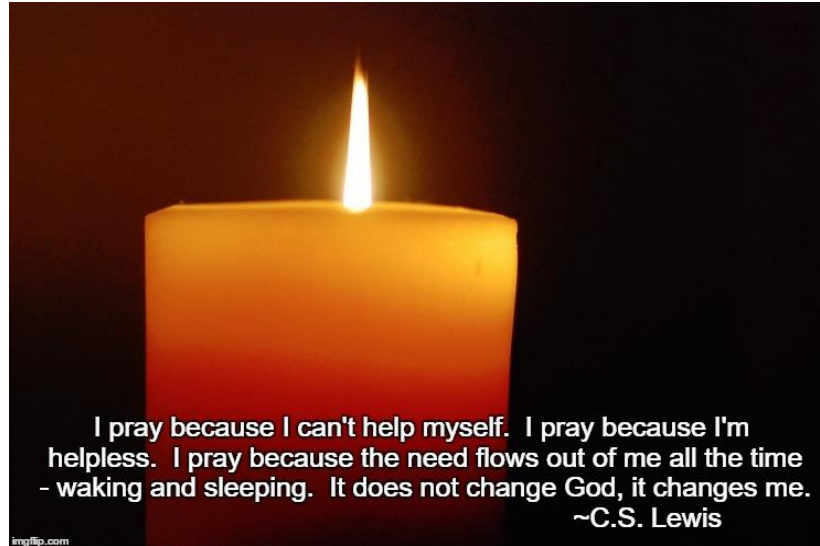


The Anglican Rosary

praying with beads



Introduction

Origin

What is the Anglican Rosary and where did it come from? Over the centuries the Christian tradition has developed multiple forms of the Rosary of which two are primarily used. One is an eastern form of 100 beads used by Orthodox Christians, the other being the western form used in Catholic Christianity which contains some 60 beads divided up into five groups called 'decades.'

Recently, as Anglicans and others have continued to explore contemplative prayer, a new shape of the Rosary and new forms of prayer combining a fresh understanding of older, more traditional Christian symbols has emerged. This is called the Anglican Rosary

Structure

The Anglican Rosary is divided into four parts:

1. The **Cross or Crucifix** is the beginning of the Rosary
2. The **Invitatory Bead**, which is just above the cross, invites us into the circle of the Rosary
3. The circle of the Rosary is divided into four quadrants marked by four **Cruciform Beads**
4. Between the cruciform beads are four sets of seven beads called **Weeks**

Sacred Symbolism

There are many levels of sacred symbolism embedded within the Anglican Rosary.

First, the structure of the Rosary itself: the cross/crucifix signifies our entry into sacred time and our exit through the cross of Jesus Christ; the invitational bead invites us to consciously take up our cross and enter into a spiritual journey of prayer; the cruciform beads form the most central symbol of our faith, the cross; the beads of the weeks carry the significance of the seven days of creation, the temporal week and the seven seasons of the church year.

Second, in the tradition of Christian symbolism, the church's calendar has been divided into four quadrants interesting the yearly passage of the sun through the Summer and Winter Solstice and the Spring and Fall equinox. Almost from the very beginning of Christianity the major events of Christ's life have been joined to these four cardinal points around whose bisecting arms 'hangs' then entire life of Christ. The transformed life of the resurrection is not limited to time and space and so consequently each prayer of the Rosary is followed by silence in which we are invited to journey through death and resurrection into the eternal and infinite presence of God. In its yearly round, the Church's Calendar moves through the cardinal points of the solar cycle and using the symbol of the Sun leads us through the drama of the life of the Son of God. The seven seasons of the church year (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, Easter and Pentecost) form the 'week' of the Christian year and take us deeply into the mystery of God. The seasons are strategically placed around the four cardinal points, adding to their spiritual significance. For example, Christmas falls on or replaces the ancient feast of Winter Solstice; this pagan feast signified the birth of light into the world and the return to light from darkness – fitting as Christians understand Christmas as the birth of the Divine Light.

Finally, the circle of beads signifies the wheel of time into which each of us is born. The central purpose of our lives is the spiritual journey, through which prayer is essential. Our prayer moving around the circle of the beads symbolizes our spiritual pilgrimage following Christ.

Practice

An Aid to Prayer

Praying the Rosary begins in faith, and the power of faith eventually carries us to deeper levels of prayer. Both the repetition and tactile nature of the Rosary help us to focus our prayerful attention and bring us deeper into the presence of God. As a practical aid to prayer, there are several reasons for using the Rosary:

- ❖ It breaks the time of prayer into smaller elements by which one can more easily focus and concentration attention
- ❖ The pressure of the fingers on each successive bead is an aid in keeping the mind from wandering

- ❖ The structure of the Rosary into ‘weeks’ releases us from tedium into the beauty of its rhythm, and give a reliable structure for focused prayer
- ❖ The audible repetition of the words helps to gather and focus our attempts in bringing discipline to our spiritual attention
- ❖ The beads which remain to be prayed are an encouragement to continue the prayer until the end

Instructions for Practice

The Rosary may be prayed alone or in groups.

- ❖ Begin praying the Rosary by selecting the prayer you wish to use. Read through it and become familiar with its content. As far as possible, commit the prayer to memory—this will come in time as you repeatedly use the prayer.
- ❖ Find a quiet spot and allow your body and mind to become restful and still. After a time of silence, begin praying the Rosary at a pace that is unhurried and intentional.
- ❖ Begin with the opening sentences designated for the cross/crucifix holding the Rosary in the right hand and making the sign of the cross. Prayer through the beads begins with the Invitatory Bead, continues through the Cruciform beads and the Weed, and ends coming back to the Invitatory Bead as the final bead, and again holding the cross/crucifix and making the sign of the cross.
- ❖ In a group setting it is best to say or chant the Rosary all together at a cadence established by a leader.
- ❖ Upon completion of the round of the Rosary, silence should follow the prayer. This silence allows you to center your being in an extended period of silence. It also invites reflection and listening after you have invoked the Name and Presence of God.

+ Taken from The Anglican Rosary by Lynn C. Bauman