

Introducing A Rosary of Peace

By Robert Llewelyn

1. 'A Rosary of Peace' (see separate leaflet) introduces the rosary principle of prayer to Anglicans and others who may not be familiar with it. It makes use of the Catholic instrument of the rosary both on account of its suitability and availability, and it uses all the scriptural devotions of the Catholic rosary, but not the Hail Mary.
2. Lest, however, the presentation of an alternative rosary be misunderstood, let it at once be gladly affirmed, that for very many Christian people throughout the world, the traditional rosary is a joyful and fruitful devotion through which their prayer life is daily nourished and renewed. If this and the accompanying leaflet can serve to encourage some in the traditional use, that can be seen only as an added gain.
3. Yet it has to be accepted that only a small minority of Christians beyond the Catholic and Orthodox Churches are at ease with the Hail Mary. At the same time it seems that there would be many who would welcome a rosary style of devotion, but with a different prayer for the decades on which the Hail Mary is ordinarily said. The present writer has received many letters to this effect, and a recent letter to The Church Times offering an alternative rosary pattern has brought in over five hundred letters asking for one or more leaflets.
4. There must be as many potential rosaries as people to use them. But there is clear advantage in an invitation to begin with a definite form. To suggest that the rosary may be begun with any pattern of prayer is likely to result in it not being begun at all. Yet this need not be understood too rigidly. Those, for example, who are already familiar with the Jesus Prayer of the Orthodox Church, or some other well-tryed prayer, may want to look no further. New uses for the rosary - much of it in silence, expressing longing, trusting, resting in God - open out as we become accustomed to it.
5. A new form of words, like a new medicine, takes time to work itself into the system. It is likely that you will not know if 'A Rosary of Peace' is for you until you have used it twice a day for at least a month. Later, if you adopt it, you will want to extend the use. After a while the words will increasingly take root in .your heart, and at times, without apparent invitation, say themselves. Always remember that the movement of the rosary is from the state of praying to that of being prayed.
6. The rosary principle is important because it offers a structured form of prayer. It performs a similar function to the Offices of the Church in that it makes a bridge between discursive meditation and silent contemplative prayer. The rosary is, in fact, a Little Office and, whether in this or in the traditional form, it is governed by the prayer which Jesus

himself gave us. It may be extended to any length and has the advantage of simplicity -- no books, no finding of places, and the rosary itself is easily carried wherever we go. Further, without ceasing to have its own special place, it will work towards feeding the fuller liturgical life of the Church.

7. Touch is important, with all our other senses, and Catholics wisely incorporate it into their prayers. The tactile element in the rosary meets a deep psychological need p y passing of the beads through the fingers helps to promote recollection so long as the desire to y remains, long after the words have dropped away.

8. Six good reasons for a rosary structure of prayer are:

[a] the time is broken up into small elements and these can be dealt with one by

[b] The pressure of the fingers on each successive bead is an aid in keeping the mind from wandering,

[c] The breaking up into five decades relieves the monotony of the exercise.

[d] The audible repetition of the words helps to gather the attention into what is being done [though later the rosary may be used in silence]

[e] The beads which remain to be worked are an encouragement to continue to the end.

[f] The rosary itself, carried in pocket or handbag, is a reminder of prayer and an encouragement to it.

9. Four ways in which the rosary may help are:

(a) **It deepens the prayer life.** Prayer is a holding on to God until one moves into the knowledge that one is being held. In the rosary one may be especially aware that this movement is taking place.

(b) **It counters subjectivity.** Preoccupation with our own concerns is an ever present danger in prayer. Rosary prayer is centred on God, and takes us beyond our own imagined needs.

(c) **It promotes recollection.** The rosary helps to establish the heart in silence before God. It offers breathing points when we are in danger of suffocating from the pressures of the day. The words act as a magnet drawing the heart into silence.

(d) **It combats temptation.** As light dispels darkness so the rosary works to dispel destructive emotions such as envy, resentment, bitterness; and, too, negative states as anxiety, depression, and a doubting fear as to the fullness of God's saving work in Christ an 'ignorance which is the greatest of all hindrances to God's lovers' (Julian of Norwich).

10. My own correspondence through the year (since the publication of a book on the subject) assures me that there are many people in the Church today who would gladly respond to the rosary. This at least is certain: that if the Church is to make impact on the secular climate which pervades us, it must, through one means or another, grow in the contemplative dimension which it is the work of the rosary to encourage :

Two common objections answered

Two objections commonly brought are that the rosary involves vain repetition, and that it makes prayer mechanical.

Life is full of repetition: breathing, walking, swimming, knitting. There is no end. Everything depends on the word 'vain'. A repetitive activity is not vain provided a useful purpose is served. Repetitive prayer is not vain since when made with right intention each repetition takes us more closely into the heart of God. Consider the following passage: 'We are not to think that long continuance of the same cry to God means no change. The outward expression may be the same, but the force of no two acts can ever be the same. The fact that five seconds ago I said, "Jesus, I love thee", wrought a change in me, so that when I say the same words again, I bring to them a stronger spirit of love and devotion to our Lord than would have been possible in the first instance. The first act brought me into closer and fuller union with him, and although I may not perceive it, so profound a change was wrought in me that each succeeding act makes upon my character an increasingly powerful impress, the force and effect of which is ever mounting. So, strictly speaking, it is not repetition. It is not the same but a different work that is done. Thus, as we go on in the work of prayer, the soul does not, cannot, abide in any one stay. There is a continual deepening of spiritual quality, and an intensification of love, and with love all the other virtues flower every moment into newer and richer things'.

Then the second objection, that the rosary makes prayer mechanical. It is true that a mechanical element is brought in, but this does not matter; in fact it helps rather than hinders. The important thing is that prayer shall not become merely mechanical. A mechanical element enters into everything we do: walking, driving, writing. It is because I can write largely mechanically that my mind is set free to express my thoughts. Similarly in the saying of the rosary the mechanical element sets the mind free to rest in God. This is the important point to grasp. Repetitive prayer works first at the relatively superficial level in holding before the mind material for meditative reflection. Later (and much more importantly) it frees the mind for engagement at a deeper level. Thus the emerging, unfolding and deeper self is encountered, and new energies of the spirit are released.