

Why pray the rosary, why pray to Mary?

By Jesse Romero

Q1) What does the word ‘pray’ actually mean?

A1) Webster’s dictionary: Pray (1) to implore or beseech. (2) to ask for by prayer or supplication; beg for imploringly. (3) to recite (a prayer). (4) **to ask** very earnestly; make supplications as to a deity. (5) **to worship God**, as by reciting a certain set of formulas.

Prayer (1) the act or practice of praying as to God. (2) an earnest request, entreaty, supplication.

The English word “pray” simply means “to ask earnestly” — it doesn’t always mean worship. We only worship God (that’s called *latria* in theological language). When Catholics “pray to” Mary or the saints, we are not worshipping them; we’re asking for their intercession (this is called *dulia* for saints, and *hyperdulia* for Mary because of her unique role). Same word (“pray”), two completely different meanings depending on the context and the person we’re addressing.

Here’s a great everyday example from legal English that even the U.S. Supreme Court accepts without blinking: In an official Los Angeles County arrest-warrant application, the detective (called the “affiant”) formally writes: **“Wherefore, your affiant prays that an arrest warrant be issued for said defendant.”**

Everyone understands that the detective is not worshipping the judge or treating the judge like God. He is simply making a respectful, formal request (“I pray that the court will grant this warrant”). The word “prays” here just means “asks.”

That’s exactly what Catholics are doing when we say, “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners...” We’re asking Mary — who is alive in heaven and closer to her Son than anyone — to pray for us, just as we might ask a trusted Christian friend on earth, “Please pray for me.” Scripture itself tells us to pray for one another (1 Tim 2:1–4; James 5:16), and death doesn’t end our membership in the Body of Christ. Mary isn’t a rival to Jesus; she always points us to her Son (as she did at the wedding at Cana: “Do whatever He tells you”). So, in short:

- Praying to God = worship + petition
- Praying to Mary or the saints = respectfully asking them to pray for us to God

Same old English word. Totally different meaning. No idolatry involved — just family asking family for help.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA - COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

**PROBABLE CAUSE ARREST WARRANT AND AFFIDAVIT IN SUPPORT THEREOF
(AFFIDAVIT)**

Your affiant, _____, is employed as a peace officer for the _____ Department and has attached hereto and incorporates by reference official reports and records of a law enforcement agency. These reports were prepared by law enforcement officers and contain factual information and statements obtained from victims, witnesses, and others which establish the commission of the following criminal offense(s): _____

by the following person: _____

WHEREFORE, your affiant prays that a warrant of arrest be issued for said person.

(Signature of Affiant)

(ARREST WARRANT) *

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA TO ANY PEACE OFFICER OF SAID STATE: proof by the accompanying and incorporated affidavit having been made before me by _____ I find probable cause to believe that the therein described criminal offense(s) was (were) committed by the below named and described person. Wherefore, you are commanded forthwith to arrest said person and bring said person before any magistrate in Los Angeles County, or in lieu thereof, you may release said person from custody prior to the time limitations of Penal Code Section 825 without bail or appearance before a magistrate. The arrestee may also be released on bail in the amount of \$ _____.

This warrant may be executed at any time during the _____ calendar days following its issuance.

PERSON TO BE ARRESTED

NAME & AKA'S						
SEX	RACE	D.O.B.	HEIGHT	WEIGHT	HAIR	EYES
MARKS:						
VEHICLE YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	VEHICLE LIC. NO.	STATE		
RESIDENCE ADDRESS						
ADD'L. RESIDENCE ADDRESS						
BUSINESS ADDRESS						
CH NO.	OTHER NOS.:					

Q2) When Catholics pray to Mary and the saints, they are praying to dead people, this is condemned in Deuteronomy 18:10-11.

A2) Matthew 22:31-32 (RSV) Jesus said: “And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.”

The holy people (or saints) who have gone before us to the Father are more alive than we are. As this verse says, God is the God of the living not of the dead. Jesus makes this clear by naming Abraham, Isaac & Jacob as being alive. Deuteronomy 18:11(RSV) forbids the conjuring of spirits from the dark underworld (sheol) in order to talk with them through a medium (ie. séance or the ouija board). This is not what the Catholic Church teaches or practices. We are asking fellow members of the Body of Christ who have achieved their heavenly goal to pray for us. That’s their primary ministry at this point in heaven, all the saints are assigned the ministry of intercession (praying for us) in heaven. We do “pray to her” (cf. CCC 2679).

In Romans 14:9 “For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.”

Non - Catholics sometimes ask us what is the difference between the Catholic habit of prayer to the blessed dead and necromancy or a seance. In reply, a Catholic should ask, "What is the difference between miracles and magic? Or between the biblical prophecy and clairvoyance?" Answer those questions and you've answered the question about prayer to the dead. For the basic difference in all three questions is ‘Jesus Christ’. Prayer to the dead and for the dead is not done apart from Jesus Christ, but through him. He is our sole bond with the blessed dead. But since he lives forever and they live in him, then they remain bonded to us in him as well. For we are members, not merely of Christ, but of one another (Romans 12:5). So say a prayer for your beloved dead and ask the saints and holy souls to pray for you.

Q3) Objection: Catholics practice vain repetitious prayer (during the rosary) which is condemned in Matthew 6:7 (NAB).

A3) Our Lord Jesus Christ repeated his prayers as well. In Matthew 26:44 (RSV) it reads:

“So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words.”

It is true that sacred scripture condemns vain repetitious prayer. The rosary, though it contains many of the same prayers, is not in vain, just as Jesus prayers identified in this verse were not vain. If the mind and heart are focused on God, who can say these prayers are in vain. Most people who attack the rosary don’t understand it is a prayer of meditation upon the mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ. Frequent meditation upon these mysteries can only draw one closer to Jesus Christ. Try it and see! The chosen people of God and Our Lord Jesus were Jews, they prayed repetitious prayers during Jewish Liturgies.

In Revelation 4:8 (RSV) the angels in heaven also practice repetitious prayer. Scripture says: “And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within, and day and night they never cease to sing, ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!’”

Here we have angels in heaven praising God day and night saying the same thing over and over. If these were vain repetitions, God would not allow it in heaven. God didn’t condemn repetitious prayer; only vain repetitious prayer. If prayers are said with heartfelt adoration and praise for God, they are not in vain? Who is to judge whether someone is praying in vain? Do we know their hearts? Only God can read our hearts. Repetition is not the problem; the key operative word is VAIN repetition. That is, not praying from the heart. The language of love is repetition. How many times will a lover tell the beloved that he loves her, and she never tires of hearing these tender words.

Q4) I admit that the ‘Our Father’ is in the Bible, but the ‘Hail Mary’ was invented by you Catholics, it’s not biblical?

A4) Not true, here you go: “Hail (Mary), full of grace, the Lord is with you” (Luke 1:28). “Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb (Jesus)” (v.42). Holy Mary – “you have found favor with God” (v.30), Mother of God – “mother of my Lord” (v.43) – “pray for us sinners” - “pray for us (sinners), (Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1).”

Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death: By asking Mary to pray for us, we acknowledge ourselves to be poor sinners and we address ourselves to the "Mother of Mercy," the All-Holy One. We give ourselves over to her now, in the today of our lives. And our trust broadens further, already at the present moment, to surrender "the hour of our death" wholly to her care. May she be there as she was at her son's death on the cross. May she welcome us as our mother at the hour of our passing to lead us to her son, Jesus, in paradise (CCC 2677).

At the Council of Ephesus in 431AD, Holy Mother Church defined that the Blessed Virgin is truly the Mother of God and gave us the conclusion of the Hail Mary: “Holy Mary, Mother of God...” which officially became the second part of the Hail Mary in 1568 (America Needs Fatima; The Rosary the Great Weapon of the 21st Century; 2020; p.56).

One of the most powerful means of private devotion for an increase in grace is the Holy Rosary. It is a complete meditation on holiness — the holiness of the life of Our Blessed Lord, delivered to us by Our Blessed Mother, who is always presenting to us Her Divine Son. The holy rosary prayed properly is the Christian meditation on the life of Christ through the eyes of Our Lady – and the Bible says, “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Philippians 4:8 RSV).

Our Lord & Our Lady are all these things, true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious, excellent, praiseworthy – therefore we think about them in the holy rosary.

Psalm 63:6 (RSV) “...I think of thee upon my bed and meditate on thee in the watches of the night.”

Q5) Those in heaven can't hear our prayers, they're dead.

A5) Mark 12:26-27 (NAB) “And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God said to him, ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’ He is not God of the dead, but of the living; you are quite wrong.”

The saints in heaven are more alive and aware of what's going on than we are. They're not separated from the Body of Christ but actually, more united to Him and therefore more united to us. Their love for us is now totally pure and they desire God's blessings and salvation for us. Asking them to pray for us is similar to asking a holy friend to pray for us. It is precisely because of the mediation of Christ that we can pray for each other because 'we are in Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:27; Colossians 3:3 NAB)'. Yes, Christ is the one mediator between God and man, but “we share in Christ (Hebrews 3:14 NAB),” therefore we also share in His mediation (in a subordinate role).

- *Dwight L. Moody: “One day you'll hear that Dwight L. Moody is dead. Don't believe it for a moment. I'll be more alive than ever.”*
- *Hank Hanegraaff, the (protestant) Bible Answer Man: speaking about his deceased Father wrote: “Today, Dad is more alive than he ever was on this earth. And this is just the beginning, the best is yet to come.”ⁱ James White (Protestant apologist) at the Great debate; Long Island New York against Patrick Madrid (Catholic apologist), July 2002. A question from the audience was directed to James White. “If Mary and the other saints supposedly can't handle all our prayers from us on earth because they are not God, how is it then possible for Satan to tempt all of us as constantly and consistently as he does? Do you believe Satan to be omniscient?*

James White: “No it is through his demons.”

Patrick Madrid: “This is a clear example of dodging a bullet because that question was right on target. In other words, the devil is a creature, and St. Peter tells us in his 2 Epistle “Satan is like a roaring lion prowling around”

he doesn't say satan and his crew, but satan himself, the devil. So, there is a unique and personal quality to satan and the individual being himself carries out, and the questioner was absolutely right. This is something that is going on, on a global scale, effecting billions of people, and Dr. White just dodged the bullet by saying it's the demons doing it. I think everyone in the room understands the force of the question, that a creature is performing an incredible action that we can't understand how it can be done but the fact is this creature is capable of doing it and the extension of that thought is that the saints in Heaven even more so because they are in Christ and through his grace are capable of doing astounding things.

Ephesians 3:20 (RSV) "Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think..." *This is why we believe that the saints can hear us from heaven and pray for us, precisely because of the power of God working in them, which enables them to do far more for us than we can even think of or imagine.*

Here is more evidence that those in heaven certainly can hear our prayers.

In Revelation 5:8 (RSV) it reads: "And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints..."

The prayers of the saints (Christians on earth) are being offered to God by the twenty four elders (the saints in heaven). Here we see that the saints in heaven hold an office of intercession for those on earth. What petitions would the saints in heaven have to offer God if it weren't for the petitions we give them? The saints in heaven are perfectly happy and have NO needs. If the saints in heaven couldn't hear our prayers, then this would imply that they are separated or cutoff from the Body of Christ. In fact, they are more alive than we are (cf. Mark 12:26-27 RSV) and are more closely united to Christ than we are. The saints occupy a fulltime ministry of intercession for us on earth. They (the saints in heaven) carry our prayers (the Christians on earth) in these golden bowls full of incense to Jesus Christ our Savior. 'Incense' is a metaphor for 'prayers' rising to heaven (cf. Psalm 141:2; Revelation 8:4 RSV).

Q6) Do the saints know what's happening on planet earth?

A6) God has joy in heaven over the conversion of a sinner (cf. Matt 18:13). God shares his joy with us & the saints in heaven (cf. John 15:11; 16:20-24;17:13). They (saints & angels) rejoice in heaven over the conversion of a sinner (cf. Luke 15:7). The Bible tells us there are angels in heaven in Luke 15:10 and saints in heaven in Revelation 6:9-11; 7:9-10. Jesus says in heaven they rejoice which indicates that they can see and hear us. The souls in heaven have a concern for us below and rejoice at our repentance. They're aware of what's happening on earth, remember, the saints make up that 'great cloud of witnesses that surround us' (cf. Hebrews 12:1 NAB)'. We don't know the mechanics of how this happens, but we know from scripture that it happens. Here is clear evidence.

Revelation 5:13 'Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, everything in the universe, cry out: "To the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor, glory and might, forever and ever.'" Notice John hears EVERY creature in heaven and on earth and he is not omniscient (only God is). In fact, John is sitting in a prison on the Island of Patmos as he writes this. Yet, by divine permission John who is still alive on earth, or maybe caught up in heaven temporarily in ecstasy is able to hear EVERYONE. This demonstrates that Our Lady and the saints in heaven, by divine permission are able to hear our prayers on earth as well.

"Its part of traditional Catholic teaching that the saints know the conditions and the needs of those who pertain to them in any way. The father of a family would know about his children. A Bishop would know about his diocese and a Pope about the Church as a whole. Out of charity which animates them in heaven, they desire the spiritual benefits of which these individuals stand in need. For the rest, the saints have an

efficacious but general love, desire and prayer. God permitting, the saints would know those who appeal to them in prayer individually” (Magnificat; ‘How we Attain the Risen Life’; by Fr Joseph Clifford Fenton; Nov. 2022; vol.24, no.9, p.285).

Q7) Why are the prayers of the saints in heaven more powerful than the people at my church?

A7) The saints are citizens of heaven (cf. Phil 3:20 NAB). They have face to face fellowship with God (cf. 1 Cor 13:12 NAB). God gives the saints his glory (cf. John 17:22). The saints are “spirits of just men made perfect” (Hebrews 12:22-23 RSV), therefore the saints are ‘righteous men’ and we know that the “prayers of a righteous man has great power in its effects (cf. James 5:16 RSV).”

Q8) What about 1 Timothy 2:5 – Jesus is the ONLY mediator between God and men. How can you call on the saints to pray for you?

A8) The text that Protestants believe disallows asking the saints to pray for us is 1 Timothy 2:5 “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” However, the word “one” in v.5 is “heis” in Greek which means “first or primary.” It doesn’t use the Greek word “monos” which means “sole, only, exclusive one.” However, we must remember that Christian mediation through intercessory prayer is qualitatively different from the mediatorship of Christ, and it is only possible because JESUS CHRIST is the one mediator between us and the FATHER. Because of his death on the cross we can go boldly go into the presence of the FATHER and pray, intercede, petition, and supplicate on behalf of others. Another reason there’s no conflict between asking fellow Christians for prayers and believing that JESUS is the one mediator between GOD and man is that JESUS shares His other unique roles with us (in lesser ways of course). Intercessory prayer originates in Jesus Christ, our Eternal High Priest (Hebrews 3:1), who is interceding now in heaven (Hebrews 7:24-25). This divine intercession then flows from Christ into the members of His Body through the Holy Spirit (John 15:1-5). The biblical principle of interceding for others in prayer is perfectly reasonable to Protestants. Ask if he has any objections to one Christian praying for another. He’ll say ‘no’. Then remind him that asking Christians in heaven to pray for us is essentially the same thing as asking a Christian on earth to do so. If he disagrees with this line of reasoning, point out that if asking Christians in heaven to pray for us conflicts with Christ’s mediatorship, then asking Christians here on earth to pray for us conflicts for the same reason. If a Protestant wants to say that 1 Timothy 2:5 eliminates intercession by Christians in heaven, it then also eliminates intercession by Christians on earth. But this would be a serious misreading of the text. Far from excluding Christians from a share in Christ’s mediatorship, Paul is actually emphasizing that we share in it through intercessory prayers. Our intercessions are effectual precisely and only because Christ is the one mediator. JESUS allows us and the saints to share in his ministry of prayer as subordinate mediators because we are all the family of God.

CCC-956 “Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness. . . so by their fraternal concern is our weakness greatly helped.”

Notice the CCC 956 says that the saints have 'fraternal concern' for us. Another verse in the book of **Revelation 21:21, it says that the streets of heaven are transparent gold**. That the saints in heaven look down on their loved ones still on earth (or in purgatory) is a very old and widespread Catholic devotional image based on this verse. Moreover, the **saints and angels rejoice when a sinner converts (cf. Luke 15:7)** because God permits them to know.

Q9) Jesus is our only intercessor (1 John 2:1 NAB). Nobody else can be an intercessor.

A9) It is true, that intercessory prayer originates in Jesus Christ, our Eternal High Priest, who is interceding now for us in heaven (cf. Hebrews 7:24-25 NAB). This divine intercession then flows from Christ into the members of His Body through the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 1:5-6; Col 1:24). That’s why we are called to make intercessions,

prayers and petitions for all men, especially those in authority (c.f. 1 Tim 2:1 RSV). Remember, the saints in heaven are perfected members of the body of Christ.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), a Doctor of the Church and one of the most influential theologians in Catholic history. In his famous homilies on the Song of Songs (specifically Homily 51), St. Bernard describes Mary as the "neck" of the mystical body because:

- Just as the neck connects the head (Christ) to the body (the Church and all believers), Mary unites us to her Son.
- She channels God's grace to us, much like how the neck allows blood and nutrients to flow from the head to the rest of the body.
- He writes: "Mary is the neck, through which the Head communicates to the members, and by which the members are united to the Head."

This imagery draws from St. Paul's letters (e.g., Ephesians 4:15–16, where Christ is the head of the body, the Church). St. Bernard's devotion to Mary was legendary—he's often called the Honey-Sweet Doctor for his eloquent writings on Mary.

St. Bonaventure (1217–1274), the great Franciscan Doctor of the Church, is the saint who famously called Mary the "**neck of the Mystical Body of Christ.**"

In his work Sermon X on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, he writes:

"Mary is the neck of the Mystical Body, through which grace flows from the Head to the members."

This beautiful metaphor emphasizes Mary's unique role as the **channel of grace** between Christ (the Head) and the Church (His Body). Just as the neck connects head to body, Mary perfectly united to her Son mediates His graces to us—**always pointing to Him**, never replacing Him.

You can add this to your explanation for extra theological weight:

"As St. Bonaventure, a Doctor of the Church, beautifully put it: Mary is the 'neck of the Mystical Body'—the vital connection through which Christ's grace flows to us. That's why we ask her prayers!" This isn't just a random Catholic idea—it's rooted in centuries of saintly wisdom.

Q10) Did Jesus ever pray the rosary?

A10) No, because JESUS **entire life** is the rosary! Actually, JESUS may have prayed the rosary when he was a child. Here is a little satire, I can imagine Our Lord when He was a baby, pulling on Our Lady's dress "to ask" her a question saying (10 times) – "Ma ma ma ma ma ma ma ma ma" (or in Hebrews "eema, eema, eema...") I guess that would qualify as the praying the rosary. *Actually, the holy rosary was given to St. Dominic of Guzman in the 12th century by the Blessed Virgen Mary. The rosary is a meditation on the 4 Gospels, the rosary is the Bible of the poor & the illiterate. The Bible wasn't available until a Catholic inventor named Johannes Gutenberg in the year 1436 created the printing press. The rosary is our unbiblical cord to God, as St. Louis de Montfort said, "To Jesus through Mary." If GOD came through Her to us, then why can't we go through Her to Him?*

Q11) An anti-Catholic like Jack Chick (now deceased) would say: 'Mary is nothing special, she was a sinner like everyone else, God just used her and then kicked her to the curb. She doesn't deserve anymore praise and honor than you and I. In fact, praising her is unbiblical. Anybody who praises her cannot be spirit filled.'

A11) On the contrary, spirit filled people praise her. In Luke 1:41-42 (RSV) it reads "And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

Non-spirit filled people that imitate the devil spew hatred & lies against her. Sacred Scripture says: "The serpent (devil) poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman (Mary), to sweep her away with

the flood (cf. Revelation 12:15 RSV).”
“*The river of water symbolizes the destructive forces of evil unleashed by the devil.*”ⁱⁱ *Today the devil attacks our Lady by blasphemies against the Immaculate Conception, her perpetual virginity, her divine maternity, fomenting indifference and hatred against Our Lady.*ⁱⁱⁱ *This is how demons attacks us, they use words to tamper with our thoughts (cf. Genesis 3:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:14; Matthew 4:1-11 NAB), Satan is known as a liar, accuser, deceiver and slanderer. The word ‘Devil’ in Greek means ‘slanderer.’*

Catholics and Orthodox have a relationship with the saints which strikes many non-Catholics as somewhere between idolatrous and extraneous. Protestants say ‘Why not just honor God?’ Why all the extra to-do about the saints? The basic reason is because God makes a fuss about saints - *Psalm 148:14 (RSV)* “...praise for all his saints.” To love GOD is to love those he loves. To praise them is to praise their God. It's not a zero-sum game. Jesus Christ came to make sinners - saints. When an artist works that hard to create something, it's hardly polite to ignore his masterpiece. The saints are God's perfect work of art, God's dream team, they are heavens Hall of Fame and the blessed Virgin is God's masterpiece.

ⁱ Hanegraaff, Hendrik Hank. “Hendrik Hanegraaff's Father Passes Away.” Feb. 2000.

ⁱⁱ Gavigan, James , Brian McCarthy, and Thomas McGovern. *The Navarre Bible the Book of Revelation* . 1st ed. Vol. 12. Dublin, Ireland: Four Courts Press, 1998. Print. The Navarre Bible text & commentaries. p.103

ⁱⁱⁱ *The Five Sins Against Our Lady*. N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Apr. 2017.

<http://www.traditioninaction.org/religious/a019rpFiveSins_GuidoDelRose.htm>.

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