



On your marks

Finding ways to connect with the worldwide family of the Christian faith has been a growing area of interest both in churches and schools. Such windows into the multicultural and international practice of Christianity in today's world are a vital resource to give us a true picture of what it means to be a global Christian in the 21st century. For Christians this is of course also important evidence of the continuing truth and power of the story of Jesus to influence lives and transform societies.

In [A-cross the World](#) (BRF, 2011), this connection to the big picture was through the symbol of the cross. Differing Christian traditions and various Christian faith communities around the world are united by this one key and central sign of a shared faith. This universal cross has at the same time been interpreted, designed and adapted to express a unique, local expression of that same faith. With each cross comes a particular story of how each community experiences God's love and puts it into action.

Get set

Each of the crosses in this new series supplements the 40 crosses that can already be found in the book [A-cross the World](#). With each there is a Bible link with wondering questions, background information about the cross, stories to share and craft ideas to make a version of the cross - providing enough material for a session with children in a church group, in the classroom or at a mixed-age event. There is also a picture provided for each cross that could be printed or used in a PowerPoint presentation in order to provide a talking point for groups or as a focus for collective worship.

This cross belongs to a series of new crosses and, as with the first collection, the overall aim remains the same, namely:

- to enable children and adults to see the cross through the eyes of other cultures and traditions
- to prompt discussion and debate on why this single, historical event continues to exercise such an influence worldwide
- to explore how Christians in a wide variety of places, different times in history and in different circumstances, have lived purposeful lives because of their faith in a Christ, who died and who is risen - symbolised by the cross

For further cross ideas linked to the church's year, go to:

- [Easter - a resurrection cross](#)
- [Lent - an ongoing idea for exploring the cross through Lent](#)



Go!

To view an associated picture for this cross, go to [A rosary cross - picture](#)

Bible Link

One month later God sent the angel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth in Galilee with a message for a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to Joseph from the family of King David. The angel greeted Mary and said, 'You are truly blessed! The Lord is with you.'

Mary was confused by the angel's words and wondered what they meant. Then the angel told Mary, 'Don't be afraid! God is pleased with you, and you will have a son. His name will be Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of God Most High. The Lord God will make him king, as his ancestor David was. He will rule the people of Israel forever, and his kingdom will never end.'

Mary asked the angel, 'How can this happen? I am not married!'

The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come down to you, and God's power will come over you. So your child will be called the holy Son of God.'

Then in a loud voice Elizabeth said to Mary: 'God has blessed you more than any other woman! He has also blessed the child you will have.'

Luke 1:26-35, 42 (CEV)

This is Luke's record of the angel Gabriel's visit to Mary with the news that she is to become the mother of God. Shortly after this, she went to stay with her older cousin Elizabeth in Judea. As soon as Elizabeth saw Mary, she felt the baby inside her own womb jump for joy, and she uttered the words that we know now as the 'Hail Mary' - a prayer that is used particularly with the rosary.

Wondering about this Bible Story

I wonder why God chose Mary to be the means of bringing Jesus into the world?

I wonder what helped Mary to accept this amazing news?

I wonder how Elizabeth knew that Mary's baby was so special? Had her husband perhaps written down what had happened in the temple and what the angel had said (see Luke 1:14-17)?

The story of the cross

The rosary is a series of beads representing prayers to be said in a particular order, often out loud. The spaces in between are for meditation on the life of Jesus. Rosary beads are on a circle of string and there is also an attachment with a cross at the end. The way to count how many prayers have been said is to move the fingers along the string of beads one at a time.



There are several suggestions for praying the rosary. Generally people begin by holding on to the cross and saying the Apostles' Creed. The next large bead represents the Lord's Prayer and then there are three beads together, which are prompts to pray the words that Elizabeth spoke in the reading (above) from Luke 1:42. This is the 'Hail Mary' - a prayer addressed to Mary and Jesus.

By this stage the person praying the rosary has worked his or her way up the attachment to the main circle of beads. At the joint the Gloria is prayed - being a song of praise that gives glory to God and whose words come from the worship of the very first Christians. In between the next sections of ten beads, it is suggested that those praying the rosary should meditate on different events (called 'the mysteries') in Jesus' life - in particular his birth, his ministry, his death and his resurrection. The Lord's Prayer should be said again, holding on to the large bead in between the groups of ten. For each the ten beads, a 'Hail Mary' prayer is offered.

The words of the prayers and ideas for reflections can be found by going to [the Catholic website](#).

People pray the rosary for different reasons: some as a discipline to help them focus their prayers and cover every part of their relationship with God. Others say that, by repeating prayers they know off by heart, it gives space for their minds to think about the deeper things of their faith. Many people who use a rosary say that the discipline of touching the beads stops their minds from wandering and helps them to focus wholeheartedly on Jesus.

Those from the Protestant and Orthodox tradition sometimes feel uncomfortable with the prayers that start by addressing Mary. However, there is much in Mary's life to copy. There are few references to her outside the birth stories in the gospels, but one in particular has her saying: 'Do whatever Jesus tells you to do' (see John 2:5).

The use of prayer beads is undergoing a revival of interest outside the Roman Catholic Church and there are now several suggested patterns for rhythmical bead-praying.

Catholics consider the rosary to be the one prayer and the principal devotion of the faithful that has been in use all through the Christian centuries. However, it was not until 1214 that the Church adopted the rosary in its present form. St Dominic is said to have received it from the Virgin Mary as a means of converting the Albigensians. St Dominic's work in France was hindered by these people, who, though 'Christians', were proving a bad example and blocking his apostolic work. He spent three days and nights in agonised prayer and harsh penance. Mary appeared to him and told him that the principal weapon was this prayer. St Dominic went on to preach the beauty and power of the rosary for the remainder of his life, forming a Confraternity of the Rosary.

Crafting the cross

You will need a large selection of similar beads or ones in a variety of colours; some attractive thread or string; and a small cross. There are small wooden crosses available from craft shops such as [Hobbycraft](#).

Make a small hole in the top of the cross and attach a short piece of string. Begin to add the beads



needed for this attachment (see picture), separating the sections with little knots. You might like to use differently coloured beads for each new section.

Next, work on the main circle of beads in four or five groups of ten with a bead in between each decade separated by little knots.

Finally attach the cross part to complete the rosary.

The cross part of this rosary stands for the Creed. The Apostles' Creed is a statement of what Christians believe about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Church. It might help to link each of these four belief areas to one extremity of the cross.

Here are some of the prayers associated with the rosary:

The 'Hail Mary':

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen

After the Rosary:

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

Cross reflection

In 2003 Tate Britain celebrated Christmas with an aspen tree decorated with 500 rosaries. This Christmas tree reminded people that, as its creator Mark Wallinger said, 'we only celebrate Christ's birth in the knowledge of the manner of his death'. According to one tradition the cross was made of aspen wood. The recitation of the prayers and mysteries of the rosary takes the one praying through the story of Jesus' life, from Bethlehem to the empty tomb.