

The Rosary

Written by W.J.Pais

It is tolerably obvious that whenever any [prayer](#) has to be repeated a large number of times recourse is likely to be had to some mechanical apparatus less troublesome than counting upon the fingers. In almost all countries, then, we meet with something in the nature of prayer-counters or [rosary beads](#). Even in ancient Nineveh a [sculpture](#) has been found thus described by Lavard in his "Monuments" (I, plate 7): "Two winged [females](#) standing before the sacred tree in the attitude of [prayer](#); they lift the extended right hand and hold in the left a garland or rosary." However this may be, it is certain that among the [Mohammedans](#) the ***Tasbih***

or bead-string, consisting of 33, 66, or 99 [beads](#), and used for counting devotionally the names of [Allah](#), has been in use for many centuries. Marco Polo, visiting the King of [Malabar](#) in the thirteenth century, found to his surprise that that monarch employed a rosary of 104 (? 108) precious stones to count his [prayers](#).

[St. Francis Xavier](#) and his companions were equally astonished to see that rosaries were universally familiar to the [Buddhists](#) of [Japan](#). Among the [monks](#) of the [Greek Church](#) we hear of the *kombologion*, or *komboschoinion*, a cord with a hundred knots used to count [genuflexions](#) and [signs of the cross](#).

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. Similarly, beside the mummy of a
[Christian](#)
[ascetic](#)
,
[Thaias](#)
, of the fourth century, recently disinterred at
[Antinöe](#)
in
[Egypt](#)
, was found a sort of cribbage-board with holes, which has generally been thought to be an
apparatus for counting
[prayers](#)
, of which
[Palladius](#)
and other ancient authorities have left us an account. A certain
[Paul the Hermit](#)
, in the fourth century, had imposed upon himself the task of repeating three hundred
[prayers](#)
, according to a set form, every day. To do this, he gathered up three hundred pebbles and
threw one away as each
[prayer](#)
was finished (
[Palladius](#)
,
Hist. Laus.
, xx; Butler, II, 63). It is probable that other
[ascetics](#)
who also numbered their
[prayers](#)
by hundreds adopted some similar expedient. (Cf. "Vita S. Godrici", cviii.) Indeed when we
find a
[papal](#)
[privilege](#)
addressed to the
[monks](#)
of
[St. Apollinaris](#)
in Classe requiring them, in gratitude for the
[pope's](#)
benefactions, to say
[Kyrie eleison](#)
three hundred times twice a day (see the
[privilege](#)
of
[Hadrian I](#)
, A.D. 782, in Jaffe-Löwenfeld, n. 2437), one would infer that some counting apparatus must

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almost necessarily have been used for the purpose.

That the Rosary is pre-eminently **the [prayer](#) of the people adapted** alike for the use of simple and learned is proved not only by the long series of [papal](#) utterances by which it has been commended to the [faithful](#) but by the daily experience of all who are familiar with it. The objection so often made against its "vain repetitions" is felt by none but those who have failed to realize how entirely the spirit of the exercise lies in the meditation upon the fundamental [mysteries](#) of our [faith](#).

To the initiated the words of the [angelical salutation](#) form only a sort of half-conscious accompaniment, a bourdon which we may liken to the "Holy, Holy, Holy" of the [heavenly choirs](#) and surely not in itself meaningless. Neither can it be necessary to urge that the freest criticism of the [historical](#) origin of the [devotion](#), which involves no point of [doctrine](#), is compatible with a full appreciation of the [devotional](#) treasures which this pious exercise brings within the reach of all.

Whether it is prayer, or any other action, if it is done without thinking, we are merely robots. ☐☐ In Latin, there is a proverb: "quidquid recipitur, modus recipienti recipitur" - which means what we receive (knowledge) is depending our our capacity to receive.☐ As Jesus says, "more will be asked from those, to whom, more is given." ☐☐ So, again like Pharisees, we should not consider someone else below us, for not understanding what we know. ☐ Let God be the judge of that.

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