

*Must I always think of every word of every Hail Mary in the Rosary?*

Must we literally think of every word when we sing, Happy Birthday, or is our mind more on honoring someone? It's common to be confused about word discipline when praying the rosary. Such scrupulous attention would be close to impossible for most of us anyway, and is not the usual advice of holy people. Some may see this as a penance to offer up, but then what about the mysteries of the rosary? How would they fit in if we are only concentrating on the words of each Hail Mary?

The repeated chorus of Hail Marys is a protective background to our meditation on the mysteries. The chorus of Hail Marys should be like a protective wall that keeps distractions out. Trying always to be aware of every word can be a distraction in itself.

We should, of course, at the back of our mind, know and agree, once for all, with the words of the Hail Mary. We point to it as our prayer behind our prayer. We also envision Mother Mary standing in the background, viewing and participating in each mystery with us.

Now we can freely meditate on the mysteries, and open our hearts and minds to the Holy Spirit. Remember, meditation is more listening than saying. Allow the Holy Spirit to speak freely. Holy thoughts that may seem secondary to the mysteries are not distractions. We should not say, "Pardon me Lord, let's talk later. I'm saying my rosary now."

When praying alone we may sometimes pause in our rosary for a while to let the Holy Spirit speak longer. Sometimes an unfinished rosary left half finished in an hour is the best prayer. Let God be boss. The rosary can often be a springboard to even deeper prayer.

Please allow here, a comment about praying the rosary with a group. Permit the leader to set the pace. Do not try to speed it up or slow it down, but try to be in chorus with the group. Listen to be in unity. The lively speed or slow reverence of the pace is not as important as the holy unity and the meditation.