

Praying the Mission Rosary

October, popularly known as “mission month,” includes the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. Each of the twenty rosary decades is devoted to a meditation on a “mystery” centered on the life of Jesus or Mary. Here the word “mystery” refers to a truth of our faith, *not* something which is incomprehensible. Thus, when Catholics pray the rosary, they are to *meditate* on twenty particular truths of the faith found in the Bible or in Catholic doctrine. These “mysteries” are grouped into four categories: Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious, and Luminous. Indeed, for numerous Catholics the rosary is truly a form of contemplative prayer, a source of profound meditation.

In February 1951 Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, during his *Catholic Hour* radio address, inaugurated a unique approach to the rosary. He noted: “We must pray, and not for ourselves alone, but for the world. To this end, I have designed the World Mission Rosary. Each of the five decades is of a different color to represent the continents.” Praying the rosary in this manner seeks to aid the Pope and the entire Church fulfill its missionary mandate.

The schema that Sheen proposed (whether or not one has the colored rosary beads) is: first, **green** is for the forests and grasslands of *Africa*; second, **blue** is for the ocean surrounding the *Pacific Islands*; third, **white** is for *Europe*, the seat of the Holy Father, the Church’s shepherd; fourth, **red** recalls the fire of faith that brought missionaries to the *Americas*; and, fifth, **yellow** represents the morning light of the East and *Asia*. This approach focuses on the “mission intention” of each decade; it is easily integrated with one’s customary manner of praying the rosary. We recall that Saint John Paul II encouraged everyone to intensify the praying of the rosary “to obtain from the Lord those graces that the Church and humanity especially need.”