

# COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

## A PRIMER ON PRAYER BEADS

People have probably been using beads as an aid to meditation and prayer since the first time someone thought to thread a few seeds onto a spare piece of twine. Strings of beads made in Africa from the shells of ostrich eggs have been dated to as early as 10,000 BC. In fact, our word “bead” has its origins in the Old English word “bede,” which means prayer!

The Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and (more recently) Anglican and Lutheran churches all have practices of prayer connected with beads or bead-like knots in a cord. The best known is the Roman Catholic Rosary (sometimes credited to Saint Dominic), though even this is probably just the most recent version of something that is much older. The Rosary is sometimes prayed in a group as a form of public worship, but all forms of prayer with beads can be practiced alone just as well as with others.

Strings of beads can come in many shapes and sizes. The way the string is arranged often (but not always) reflects how it is intended to be used. So a line of beads all the same shape and size might guide us to repeat the same prayer again and again. A larger bead in the middle of a series of smaller ones might prompt us to end or begin a cycle of prayers. And the number of beads in the string might also have a special meaning.

The prayers we might say with a string of beads are as varied as the beads themselves. We can look to the traditions of Christianity for some ideas, but routines of our own invention, or a repertoire of practices that we can choose from, or complete freedom, are also options. Included are a few examples, but do not let yourself be limited by them.

Find an expression that works for you,  
and create a string of beads to help you pray it!

# Anglican Rosary

Four sets of seven smaller beads ("weeks") separated by four larger beads, with one special outside the circle (the "invitatory" bead), leading to a cross.

- Say the Jesus Prayer on each small bead  
*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner*
- Say the Trisagion on each larger bead  
*Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on me*
- Say the Lord's Prayer on the invitatory bead as you enter and leave the circle

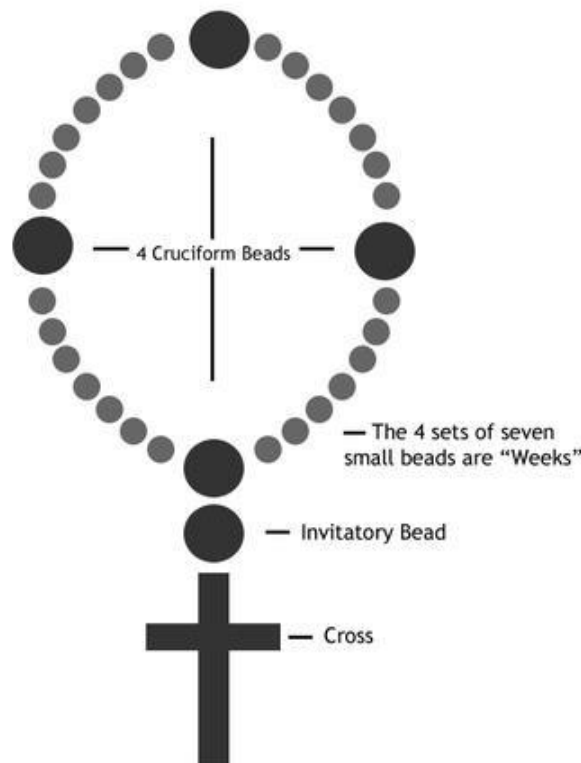
*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.*

*And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass  
against us.*

*And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.*

*For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.*

**Amen.**

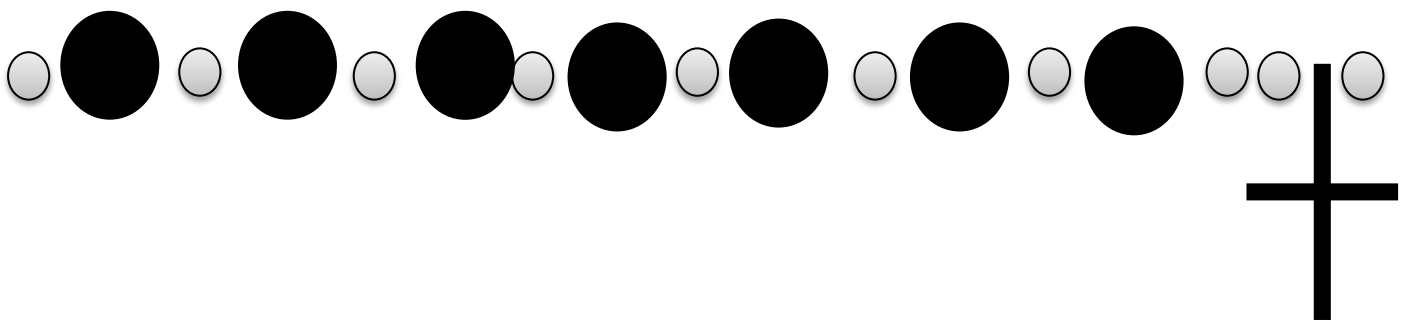
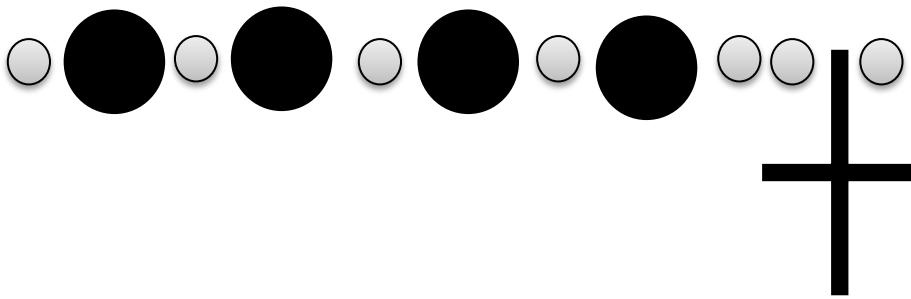


# Road for Prayer

Any number of beads strung in a link (not closed in a circle), with a cross or larger bead as an anchor or place of calm as you begin to pray.

The number could represent the number of your

- children and/or grandchildren
- a number with significance to Christianity (3, 4, 7, 12, 33)
- the 11 fruits of the spirit (chastity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, forbearance, gentleness, faith, modesty, self-control, and chastity)
- or anything else that is meaningful to your prayer



# Chaplet

Four, seven, or twelve beads, usually in a circle, with a cross at the beginning/end. Sometimes a special “invitatory” bead is at the beginning, encouraging us to pause and clear our minds for prayer.

For use in spare moments during the day:

- pray the Kyrie on each bead  
*Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy*
- say the Lord's Prayer on the cross  
*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass  
against us.  
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.***

For use in calling intentions to memory, give each bead a focus (charity, faith, zeal, patience), and pray for or about each on its bead.

