

FIRST GRADE: *Hail Mary*

**Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
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.**

Praying and focusing on the *Hail Mary* throughout the entire year will allow the children to come to know Mary and her special role in God's plan as the Mother of Jesus and our Spiritual Mother. The following resources are meant to foster this process. Please consider implementing one simple aspect of taking the children further in their understanding of the Hail Mary in an ongoing way.

God's love for us

For God so loves each one of us, "that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) God prepared a beautiful and sinless woman to be the Mother of Jesus, our Savior. When Jesus was dying on the Cross for our sins, He gave us Mary, His Mother, to be our Spiritual Mother. Mary wants to lead each of her children to her Son, Jesus. She listens with great love and concern as we speak with her. We can talk with her at any time about anything. This is part of God's plan that we go to Mary.

Why do we want to pray the *Hail Mary* on a daily basis?

- 1) To learn the *Hail Mary* prayer "by heart" and the meaning behind the words.
- 2) To come to know and love the person of Mary as the Mother of Jesus & our Spiritual Mother.
- 3) To understand that Mary loves us and wants to lead us closer to Jesus.
- 4) To pray with and to Mary for all of your intentions.

The Meaning of the Words

- A significant way we can speak with Mary is through the *Hail Mary*, a prayer from Scripture. The Angel Gabriel greeted Mary with these words: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" (Luke 1:28) God prepared Mary to be the Mother of the Savior by creating her "full of grace" from the first moment of her conception. The Blessed Virgin Mary was conceived in the womb of St. Anne without the stain of Original Sin. This was a miracle of God. St. Joachim and St. Anne were the parents of Mary. In order to be the Mother of Jesus, God created Mary "full of grace"; her soul was always full of God's life (grace). Mary always said yes to God – she never sinned. She always kept God's Commandments – His laws of love.
- **Hail Mary:** "the greeting of the angel Gabriel to Mary opens this prayer. It is God Himself who, through His angel as intermediary, greets Mary. Our prayer dares to take up this greeting to Mary with the regard God had for the lowliness of His humble servant and to exult in the joy He finds in her." (Luke 1:48; Zephaniah 3:17b) (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, hereafter CCC, paragraph 2676)
- **Full of grace, the Lord is with thee:** The Angel greets her "full of grace" so we know that Mary was conceived without the stain of Original Sin, in order to be the sinless Mother of the



Savior. The Church added Mary's name after the word "hail." Full of grace, Mary is wholly given over to Him who has come to dwell in her and Whom she is about to give to the world.

- **Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.**
Mary was told by the Angel that her cousin Elizabeth was with child in her old age. Mary immediately traveled three days on foot to Hebron to help her cousin. After receiving Mary's greeting, Elizabeth said, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!" (Luke 1:42). Mary is "blessed among women" because she believed in the fulfillment of the Lord's word through the Angel. The Savior of the world is the "fruit" of Mary's womb and so the Church added Jesus' name at the end of the phrase.
- **Holy Mary, Mother of God:** Elizabeth continued in conversation with Mary; "and why is this granted me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43) Because Mary gives us Jesus, and Jesus is God, Mary is, therefore, rightly called the Mother of God. And so we pray, using Elizabeth's words, "Holy Mary, Mother of God." (CCC 2677)
- **Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death:** We can entrust all our cares and petitions to Mary. By asking her to "pray for us sinners," we acknowledge that we offend God by the way we treat others with selfishness and unkindness. We entrust ourselves to Mary "now and at the hour of our death" because she is our loving Mother. This includes seeking her intercession for all the little deaths to selfish desires that we face each day. Further, as she faithfully stood at the foot of the Cross when Jesus was dying, we ask that Mary welcome us at our physical death, and lead us to her Son, Jesus, in Heaven.
- **Amen** We end the prayer with "**Amen**," which means "so be it", or I believe. (CCC 2856)
The words of the Hail Mary are explained further in the *Catechism*, paragraphs 2676 – 2678.

Activities for Learning the Words



- Pray the Hail Mary every day and at every session
- Echo prayer– have children repeat each phrase after you
- Make flash cards with a phrase of the prayer on each card
- Explain one phrase at a time for better understanding;
- Fill in the blanks of key words of the prayer
- Encourage parents to pray the *Hail Mary* with their children at home
- Make a booklet of the Hail Mary, with a phrase and a picture on each page that can be colored on each page.
- Sing the Hail Mary to music / YouTube video: Hail Mary Gentle Woman sung by Daughters of St. Paul (includes the words) 3 minutes, 23 seconds. YouTube video by Fely David, male voice 5 min. 38 sec.
- When teaching about the life and role of Mary, include Sacred Art pictures, such as the Annunciation - the Angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would be the Mother of the Savior and other Mysteries of the Rosary. Google the picture, then click on Images.
- Place the prayer commitment into a plastic sleeve and tie a small loop of yarn to the top loop. Parents may place the prayer commitment on the child's bedroom door knob in order to use it for prayer times (so it won't be misplaced). A gift, such as a medal and chain or a small statue could be given for incentive to be faithful each day during a period such as Advent. This incentive helps children to develop a daily habit of prayer.



- Teach the children how to pray with their heart; not just rattling words. “Prayer is internalized to the extent that we become aware of Him ‘to whom we speak.’ In the case of the Hail Mary, we are speaking with the person of Our Blessed Mother (CCC 2700, 2704)

Learning the Principles

- The Hail Mary is an early Christian prayer based upon verses in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke. Look up in the Bible - Luke 1:28, 42-43
- “Adoration” is the worship that is deserved and rightly offered to God, the Creator, alone. The adoration of Jesus is firmly rooted and grounded within the heart of the Church before any secondary veneration of Mary is progressively inspired and evoked by the Holy Spirit. **“Veneration”, that is, the special honor, devotion, reverence, and recognition of excellence we give to Mary**, God’s creature, deepens and points us toward a more perfect homage of God Himself. In appreciating and honoring Mary, the masterpiece, we give greater honor and glory to God, the Divine Artist. (See CCC 971)
- Encourage children to make a request of Our Blessed Mother for a specific need. Give an example from your own life, such as help on a test, for a sick grandmother, rain for the farmers, safe travel in a storm. When a prayer is answered, it makes faith come alive for them and will help the students to develop a relationship with Mary. At a time when students have a specific prayer that was answered, it might be most helpful for them to share it with the class. Children might keep a journal of their requests or the class might keep a list of answered requests. Mary desires a relationship with each of us. We don’t want to just ask for good things from her with no desire to speak with her and develop a friendship with her.
- Prayer is a vital necessity. Prayer and Christian life are inseparable. (CCC 2744-2745) In other words, when we pray with our heart, we come to know Jesus Christ personally and deeply. As this friendship with Him grows, we recognize more and more how much He loves us and how much we love Him. From this love, received and given, we respond from a natural desire to be one with Him in all things, and live our lives in a way that is reflective of His own. This brings much peace and joy to ourselves and those around us.
- “When we pray to Mary, we are adhering with her to the plan of the Father, who sends His Son to save all men. Like the beloved disciple, John the Apostle, **we want to welcome Jesus’ mother into our homes** (John 19:27) for she has become the mother of all the living. **We can pray with and to her**. The prayer of the Church is sustained by the prayer of Mary and united with it in hope.” (CCC 2679)
- **Mary is our Spiritual Mother.** The principal Scriptural basis for the doctrine of Mary as Spiritual Mother of all humanity is found in John 19:26-27: “When Jesus saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing near, He said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son.’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother’”.



The “beloved disciple” in this Scriptural passage is John. The beloved disciple John is a symbol of all humanity and, in a special way, of every person who likewise seeks to be a “beloved disciple” of Jesus. This has been confirmed throughout history, including Pope John Paul II who expresses “Mary’s motherhood as a personal gift which Christ gives to John, and beyond John to every individual.” (*Mother of the Redeemer*, no. 23, 45)



The teaching that Mary is our Spiritual Mother is clearly stated in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*, LG) from the Second Vatican Council when it declares:

Thus, in a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior in restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is a Mother to us in the order of grace. (61)

Significantly, this relationship with our heavenly Mother is not “general” or “collective”, in the sense that it is a gift for *all* humanity, but *very personal* to each one of us. Pope Saint John Paul II explains:

Motherhood always establishes a unique and unrepeatable relationship between two people; between mother and child and between child and mother. Even when the same woman is the mother of many children, her personal relationship with each one of them is of the very essence of motherhood. For each child is generated in a unique and unrepeatable way. (*Mother of the Redeemer* no. 45)

- **The Blessed Mother knows and loves all humanity.** More profoundly, she loves each one of us individually. Perhaps this can best be pondered and understood in her tender and maternal words spoken to St. Juan Diego under her title of “Our Lady of Guadalupe”. The tone and timbre, the delicate sensitivity, of her caring message to him is meant for each one of us. May we appreciate the strength and gentleness of this message given by her, letting it seep into our minds and hearts as we ponder it frequently and allow it to become our very *own*:



“Listen and let it penetrate your heart, do not be troubled or weighed down with grief. Do not fear any illness or vexation, anxiety or pain.

Am I not here who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not your fountain of life? Are you not in the folds of my mantle? In the crossing of my arms? Is there anything else you need?”

- **The Hail Mary is a Christ-centered prayer.** Pope John Paul II explained the Hail Mary in his apostolic letter on the Rosary: *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (RVM). The Hail Mary is not only an intercessory prayer that is permissible for Christians to recite; it’s actually a Christ-centered prayer that gives Jesus great praise. Pope Saint John Paul II called “the hinge” of this prayer, the holy name of Jesus. Do we treat the name of Jesus with extra care and speak His name with love when we recite the *Hail Mary*?
- Mary gave her consent in faith at the Annunciation and maintained it without hesitation at the foot of the Cross. Ever since, her motherhood has extended to the brothers and sisters of her Son “who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties.” Jesus, the only mediator, is the way of our prayer; Mary, His mother and ours, is wholly transparent to Him: she “shows the way”, and is herself “the Sign” of the way, according to the traditional iconography of East and West. (CCC 2674)

Spiritual Comprehension – Do they understand?

- Ask questions to ensure that the children understand the meaning of the words and know how to pronounce the words.
- **The *Hail Mary* is the prayer the girls and boys should know by heart and with good understanding before they advance to the next grade level. Therefore, it should be prayed**



at every opportunity. Please continue to teach the other prayers as listed in the Diocesan Religion Curriculum for First Grade that are to be introduced at this age level.

Encountering Jesus and Mary in Prayer

- Pray the *Hail Mary* aloud and have the children listen, preferably with their eyes closed. Have them take notice of a word or phrase that stood out for them. Allow some time of silence for the girls and boys to think about why the word or phrase stood out for them. Allowing children quiet time to reflect on the phrases of the *Hail Mary*, after they have received explanation of each phrase, takes it to the next level of a deep personal encounter. As a further progression, provide silence so that they may have a “heart-to-heart” conversation with Mary.
- Since the Hail Mary is a Christ-centered prayer, we want to pray this prayer with love for Jesus, leading to a deeper friendship with Him and adoration of Him each time we recite it.

Scriptural Foundation for the Hail Mary

- **Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.** (Luke 1:28)
- **Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.** (Luke 1:41,42)
- **Holy, Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.** (Luke 1:43)
- Jesus gave Mary to us as our Spiritual Mother when He was dying on the Cross. “When Jesus saw His Mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing near, He said to His Mother, ‘Woman, behold your son.’” Then He said to the disciple, ‘**Behold your Mother.**’” (John 19: 25-27) John the Apostle represented each one of us. Mary, as our Spiritual Mother, means that her role is to lead us to Jesus, while praying and interceding for us, her children in the order of grace. It is therefore appropriate for us to pray to Mary, asking her for help in all of our needs. (See article for your reference that is included on the Spiritual Motherhood of Mary.)
- Like the beloved disciple, John the Apostle, **we want to welcome Jesus’ mother into our homes** (John 19:27). **We can pray with and to her.** (CCC 2679)



Resources on Mary

- For further background on Mary, go to <http://diolc.org/evangelization/questions/> and find one-page explanations that point to Mary’s role in relationship to God and His plan to save us and the meaning of Spiritual Motherhood in Mary’s relationship with us. The following provide Church teaching on:
 - Mary as “Mother of God”
 - The Perpetual Virginity
 - The Immaculate Conception
 - The Assumption
 and, regarding Spiritual Motherhood - Mary’s relationship with us:
 - Spiritual Motherhood



