

Going Deeper in Prayer:

Hail Mary

**Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessed are 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 you 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. As you pray the *Hail Mary* every day, it would be helpful to occasionally, such as once a week, look over one aspect from the resources below to help you go deeper in your understanding of this prayer.

God's love for us

For God so loves you, "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, your Savior. When Jesus was dying on the Cross for your sins – and the sins of all people - He gave you Mary, His Mother. Jesus gave Mary to you to be your Spiritual Mother. Mary wants to lead you to her Son, Jesus. She listens with great love and concern as you speak with her. You can talk with her at any time about anything. This is part of God's plan that you 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 & your Spiritual Mother.
- 3) To understand that Mary loves you and wants to lead you closer to Jesus.
- 4) To pray with and to Mary for all of your intentions.



The Meaning of the Words

- The Angel Gabriel greeted Mary with these words: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" (Luke 1:28) The Church added Mary's name to the prayer. God prepared Mary to be the Mother of the Savior, Jesus 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:** These two phrases of the angel's greeting shed light on one another. Mary is full of grace because the Lord is with her. The grace with which she is filled is the presence of Him who is the source of all grace. "Rejoice . . . O Daughter of Jerusalem . . . the Lord your God is in your midst." (Zephaniah 3:14, 17a) Mary, in whom the Lord himself has just made His dwelling, is the daughter of Zion in person, the Ark of the Covenant, the place where the glory of the Lord dwells. She is "the dwelling of God . . . with men." (Revelation 21:3) 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.

Note: The standard version of the Hail Mary includes the words thee, thou and thy. You may replace these words with "you," which refers to Mary.

- **Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.** These words were spoken by Elizabeth to Mary as Mary arrived in Hebron to visit her. The angel had told Mary that Elizabeth had conceived a child in her old age and so Mary went to help her. After the angel's greeting, we make Elizabeth's greeting our own: "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb Jesus." "Filled with the Holy Spirit," Elizabeth is the first in the long succession of generations who have called Mary "blessed." "Blessed is she who believed...." (Luke 1:45) Mary is "blessed among women" because she believed in the fulfillment of the Lord's word. Mary, because of her faith, became the mother of believers, through whom all nations of the earth receive Him who is God's own blessing: Jesus, the "fruit of thy womb."
- **Holy Mary, Mother of God:** With Elizabeth we marvel, "and why is this granted me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43) My Lord refers to God. Because Mary gives us Jesus by giving Him a human nature, and Jesus is God, Mary is the Mother of God. We can entrust all our cares and petitions to her. She prays for us as she prayed for herself: "Let it be done to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38) By entrusting ourselves to her prayer, we abandon ourselves to the will of God together with her: "Thy will be done." (CCC 2677)
- **Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death:** By asking Mary to pray for us, we acknowledge ourselves to be poor sinners and we address ourselves to the "Mother of Mercy. We give ourselves over to her now, in the today of our lives. And our trust broadens further, already at the present moment, to surrender "the hour of our death" wholly to her care. May she be there as she was at her Son's death on the Cross. May she welcome us as our mother at the hour of our passing (See John 19:27) to lead us to her Son, Jesus, in paradise.
- **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 opportunity.
- 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 thinking and praying about the life and role of Mary, look at 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.
- Seek to pray with your heart; in other words think about Mary to whom you are speaking, 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 you toward a more perfect homage of God Himself. In appreciating and honoring Mary, the masterpiece, you give greater honor and glory to God, the Divine Artist. (See CCC 971)
- Make a request of Our Blessed Mother for a specific need, such as for a sick grandmother, rain for the farmers, safe travel in a storm. When a prayer is answered, it will make faith come more deeply alive for you and will help you to develop a relationship with Mary. Keep a journal of your requests and a list of answered prayers. Mary desires a relationship with each of us. You don’t want to just ask for good things from her with no desire to speak with her and develop a friendship with her.
 - When you pray to Mary, she intercedes for you with God. One thing you can be sure of is that God always answers every prayer. The answer might be “yes”, the answer could be “no”, or the answer could be “not yet” because God knows there is a “right timing” involved and that timing has not yet come. Sometimes the answer is “yes” because God knows that what you are praying for is for your good. Sometimes, the answer to your prayer might be “no” because sometimes you pray for something that you think will be the best thing for you, while indeed, you are wrong. Thank goodness the answer from God is sometimes ‘no,’ if what you are asking for is not good for you. And sometimes the answer to your prayer is “not yet” because God’s timing is always perfect. For example: He knows that you need a more mature disposition of heart in order to receive the answer. Further, this could also include the hearts of other persons as well as circumstances surrounding the situation. When you seemingly don’t receive an answer because of God’s perfect timing, you need to remember the importance of patience. The answer to prayer may also come in the form of silence, which is also guidance for you from the Lord. A lesson to learn from this situation – feeling like God is not responding over a long period of time – is to grow in your trust of Jesus; that He always wants what is best for you. God is always good even when the circumstances around you are seemingly difficult and last much longer than you want them to. The “Good News” is that “God is shaping all things together for good for those who love Him.” (Romans 8:28) It is the very nature of Who He is. Nothing in the world can change that; and you want to hold onto this truth with your whole heart for the duration.
- **Prayer is a vital necessity.** Prayer and Christian life are inseparable. (CCC 2744-2745) In other words, when you pray with your heart, you come to know Jesus Christ personally and deeply.



As this friendship with Him grows, you recognize more and more how much He loves you and how much you love Him. From this love, received and given, you respond from a natural desire to be one with Him in all things, and live your life in a way that is reflective of His own. This brings much peace and joy to yourself and those around you.

- “When you pray to Mary, you 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, you want to welcome Jesus’ mother into your home (John 19:27) for she has become the mother of all the living. You 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 your 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 your 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 your heavenly Mother is not “general” or “collective”, in the sense that it is a gift for *all* humanity, but *very personal* to you. 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 you 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 you. May you appreciate the strength and gentleness of this message given by her, letting it seep into your mind and heart as you ponder it frequently and allow it to become your 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 you treat the name of Jesus with extra care and speak His name with love when you 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

- The *Hail Mary* is the prayer that you will want to know by heart and with good understanding before you decide to go deeper with another prayer. Plan to spend an entire year praying the *Hail Mary* every day.

Encountering Jesus and Mary in Prayer

- Pray the *Hail Mary* aloud. Take notice of a word or phrase that stood out for you. Allow some time of silence to think about why the word or phrase stood out for you.
- Pray the *Hail Mary* very slowly, and take some time of silence to reflect on each of the phrases, which takes it to the next level of a deep personal encounter.
- Since the *Hail Mary* is a Christ-centered prayer, you want to pray this prayer with love for Jesus, leading to a deeper friendship with Him and adoration of Him each time you recite it.
- Take some time to quiet down interiorly and pray the *Hail Mary* very slowly. Pick out a phrase or two from the prayer. For example: "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." Repeat these words over and over again slowly. Think about how these words relate to Mary and Jesus and their love and care for you. Have a heart-to-heart conversation with Mary about Jesus. And/or have a heart-to-Heart conversation with Jesus about something that is weighing on your heart. This takes prayer to the next level of a deep personal encounter. Another helpful step is to write down some notes about the prayer experience to keep for future reference.

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

