

standing there, for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. 8 He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast. So they took it." And it was found to be wine, as the Blessed Virgin had requested (Jn 2:3-8).

What is the Prayer to her, which the Church teaches? The "*Hail Mary*;" or "*The Angelic Salutation*."

Hail Mary [*or Rejoice, Mary*]: the greeting of the angel Gabriel 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.

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." 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." 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. After the angel's greeting, we make Elizabeth's greeting our own. "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. . . ." Mary is "blessed among women" because she believed in the fulfillment of the Lord's word. Abraham, because of his faith, became a blessing for all the nations of the earth. 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?" Because she gives us Jesus, her son, Mary is Mother of God and our mother; we can entrust all our cares and petitions to her: she prays for us as she prayed for herself: "Let it be to me according to your word." By entrusting ourselves to her prayer, we abandon ourselves to the will of God together with her: "Thy will be done."

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," the All-Holy One. 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 to lead us to her son, Jesus, in paradise.

The Evangelization Station

Hudson, Florida, USA

E-mail: evangelization@earthlink.net

www.evangelizationstation.com

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The *Our Father* and the *Hail Mary*

The *Our Father*

This prayer, composed personally by our Lord Jesus is short, can be easily memorized, and contains all we need or can ask for. It contains acts of the most sublime virtues and expresses sentiments of the highest perfection. When Jesus explained the manner in which we should pray his disciples said to him: "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples" (Lk 11:1). Jesus answered them, "Pray then like this: 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 debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors; And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil" (Matt 6:9:15). This prayer contains *seven petitions*, introduced by the words, "*Our Father who art in heaven*."

God is our Father, both *by creation* and *by adoption*; and we are hereby admonished that we should go to him with confidence, as children to a good and loving Father, that we are all brethren, and that we should pray for one another as members of the same family. "...pray for one another that you may be healed.... The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects." (Jas 5:16).

First Petition: What do we pray for when we say: "*Hallowed be thy name*?" We pray for the greater honor and glory of God, or that we may all praise, love, and serve God because of his divine Perfections, and, in order that we may be enabled to do so, we beg in the next petition that he would come and establish his kingdom in our hearts.

Second Petition: What do we pray for when we say: "*Thy kingdom come*?" We pray that God will come into our hearts and reign there by his grace. We pray also, that he would rule all our actions and lead us in the path of virtue and righteousness, which would make us true members

of his spiritual kingdom here on earth, as a sure means of bringing us to his eternal kingdom in heaven. In order that we may be worthy of that heavenly kingdom, we next pray that we may, in all things, accomplish his holy will.

Third Petition: What do we pray for when we say: “*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven?*” Considering that in the kingdom of heaven for which we have prayed, the Saints always do God’s will, we pray that *we* may always do the same. The divine will should be the rule of all our actions: “My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work” (Jn 4:34). When we repeat this petition, we should at the same time, *resolve to do what we pray for*, and as a means of being enabled to do God’s holy will, we next pray for a continual supply of his graces for the daily spiritual food of our souls.

Fourth Petition: What do we pray for when we say: “*Give us this day our daily bread?*” We pray for the daily supply of all our needs, both corporal and spiritual, and thereby acknowledge our total dependence on God. As to *corporal* needs, we are admonished to be content with necessities, and for these we rely entirely on God’s providence. “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow” (Matt 6:34). “If we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content” (1 Tim 6:8). As to *spiritual* needs, we pray for divine grace as being our daily spiritual food, without which the soul languishes and dies in sin. We pray for the Blessed Eucharist; that “bread of life,” (Jn 6:48, 52), in which we receive Jesus himself who is our strength to do every good work. Conscience tells us that we are sinners and as such, are unworthy of this great blessing; therefore we beg forgiveness in the next petition.

Fifth Petition: What do we pray for when we say: “*and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us?*” Knowing ourselves to be sinners, subject to *daily* weaknesses and transgressions (for “For we all make many mistakes” (Jas 3:2), we pray *daily* for God’s forgiveness. This petition shows the

necessity of forgiving others, Christ having made this forgiveness a condition of our obtaining forgiveness from God: “but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt 6:15). Having asked for forgiveness for past sins, we pray that we might not sin again.

Sixth Petition: What do we pray for when we say: “*And lead us not into temptation?*” We beg God either to preserve us from temptation or to strengthen us in times of temptation. In the words of Saint Paul, we pray that, “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” (1 Cor 10:13). God does not *tempt us to sin*, but he *permits* us to be tempted in our trials. As long as we are living in this world, we can never be free of temptations, for we are engaged in spiritual warfare (1 Tim 1:18). But in this warfare, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9).

Seventh Petition: What do we pray for when we say: “*But deliver us from evil?*” Having prayed for the forgiveness of past sins, and that we might not sin again, we then beg God to be delivered from the consequences of sin; from all the evils of body and soul. Regarding temporal evils, such as sickness, losses, famine, etc., we should pray with the spirit of resignation as our Lord did, “Not my will, but thine, be done (Lk 22:42). Resignation, patient suffering, and a penitential spirit can convert these evils into real good. But the evils from which we principally pray to be delivered are the punishments of sin in the next life.

“Amen.” Having prayed for all we can need, we confirm our prayer by saying: “*Amen.*” This word is called by Saint Jerome “The seal of the Lord’s Prayer. It means “so be it; i.e., may God grant these petitions.

Never let a day pass without saying this prayer. The words “*this day*” and “*daily*,” show that it is intended to be said at least *every day*. Say

it often, and attentively, devoutly, and slowly in order to enter into the spirit and meaning of it. If you do so, it will be a source of many graces and blessings to you.

The Hail Mary

The Blessed Virgin Mary, as the Mother of God, is above all the Angels and Saints. She is pronounced “*Blessed among women*” (Lk 1:28), and is to be called “*blessed*” by the faithful throughout all generations. Christ appointed her as our mother and us as her children, in the person of Saint John: “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!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home” (Jn 19:26-27).

We should frequently implore her intercession. Such has been the practice of the Saints. They were noted for their tender devotion to her, for example, Saint Bernard, Saint Bonaventure, Saint Ignatius, St Alphonsus Ligouri, etc. The Saints have received many great blessings, through her intercession, and so may we, if we are, like them—fervent and devout in imploring her assistance. Pray to her for her intercession fervently and devoutly on all occasions, especially in your temptations and spiritual needs. Ask her to obtain your requests placing the greatest confidence in her intercession, for if she prays for you, you may rest assured that God will grant what she asks. Saint Bernard says that “never has anyone been known to have recourse to her protection, implore her aid, or ask for her intercession, without obtaining relief!”

The manner in which our Lord granted her request, at the marriage feast at Cana in Galilee, shows the power of her intercession: “When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” Now six stone jars were