

ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT

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Mary... Rejoice.

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There are many feasts dedicated to Our Lady, Mary, during the year but the one perhaps that stands alone is the feast of the Assumption during this month. It is held in special reverence as it reminds us that she was assumed into heaven without experiencing death in the complete way that all of us do. This was the gift bestowed upon her by The Father for giving her fiat to be the mother of Jesus. There are many different traditions associated with this event, and it is indeed a mystery, but it reminds us of the singularity of who she was. It is held therefore as a 'Holy day of Obligation.' She played an integral part of Jesus' life, and after His death with the Apostles. While we often say that we pray to Our Lady, in reality we pray through her to Jesus. As His mother she has a special place in heaven and Jesus will not refuse her anything.

As St. Louis de Montfort says, "Mary is the safest, easiest, shortest and most perfect way of approaching Jesus, we never give more honour to Jesus than when we honour His Mother".



Jesus gave us His mother at the foot of the Cross and as any mother she keeps us in her care. There are many ways to pray through her, the easiest perhaps is simply to speak to her in all sincerity and trust. But over the centuries more formal prayers have been blessed and used. We must also remember that many of these were initially a person's personal prayer and because they were beautiful became used by many... An example of this the of course, the Memorare... 'Remember O most blessed virgin Mary' etc. attributed to St Bernard of Clairvaux. So too 'The Hail Holy Queen' said often in conjunction with other prayers. In parallel to the divine office for centuries, 'The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary,' also known as Hours of the Virgin, with its cycle of psalms, hymns, scripture and other readings, is still used today by some religious congregations.

We must not forget either, that many hymns and songs are sung to honour her.

Notably the 'Ave Maria' has a special place in many a celebration such as weddings and funerals as well as being loved by solo singers, especially in Latin. This prayer, the Hail Mary, is a 'stand-alone' prayer and the most famous. Added to the 'Mass' after the bidding prayers, It is also a central part of 'The Angelus' prayer prayed by many at noon and evening as part of a daily reminder and in some ways a 'small rosary' based on scripture and the angel's salutation. But the most frequent use of the 'Hail Mary' is of course the Rosary with its four sets of mysteries reflecting the life of Jesus and Mary.

But while it is probably, together with the 'Our Father', the most familiar prayer, taught from an early age, its history is often forgotten and therefore it can become routine and mechanical, rather than a means of reflection on scripture and a lifting up of the mind and heart to God which is the definition of prayer.

The Hail Mary is made up of three sections. It is worth looking at the history of this prayer. Initially it was composed of two greetings recorded in the Gospel according to St. Luke. We read that God sends the Angel Gabriel to proclaim to Mary that she is to bear the Son of God. Upon coming to her, the Angel greets Mary, saying, "**Hail, favoured one! The Lord is with you**" (Luke 1:28). We address Mary in the same way at the beginning of our prayer. They were originally written in Koine Greek.

The opening word of greeting, χαῖρε (chaíre), here translated "hail", literally has the meaning "rejoice" or "be glad". This was the normal greeting in the language in which the Gospel of Luke is written and continues to be used in the same sense in Modern Greek. Accordingly, both "hail" and "rejoice" are

"The Hail Mary is a sharp and flaming shaft which, joined to the Word of God, gives the preacher the strength to pierce, move, and convert the most hardened hearts." St. Louis de Montfort

valid English translations of the word ("hail" reflecting the Latin translation, and "rejoice" reflecting the original Greek). The word 'Mary' was added in the thirteenth century becoming 'Hail Mary' by which title the prayer is now known.

The second part from scripture comes from the meeting of St. Elizabeth and Mary when she went to visit her cousin who was also expecting a baby, known later as John the Baptist. [And Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb"](#) Followed by... 'And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me' *Luke 1:41b-43* Again the word '**Jesus**' was added later for clarity. Thus, when we pray this prayer, we are reflecting on scripture and the Word of God central to our faith.

So, what of the third part of this prayer? The intercession 'pray for us sinners now' is a much later addition. It was thought to be added around the time of the council of Trent though it is hard to date. The Dutch Jesuit Petrus Canisius is credited with adding in 1555 in his Catechism the sentence '[Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of death.](#)'

There are riches in reflecting on this prayer. So often said in haste without true meditation of the mysteries that are contained in the Word. Because it is a short prayer, it is both easy to say and quick but this sometimes takes us away from the true purpose and intention...Some people struggle with the fact that it is not a prayer to Jesus and are therefore disparaging of it. This is to forget that minds set on scripture are hearts set on God.

St. John Paul II said it beautifully. "One thing is clear: although the repeated *Hail Mary* is addressed directly to Mary, it is to Jesus that the act of love is ultimately directed, with her and through her. God chose Mary as the singular vessel for His Son to come down to earth and save the world. In our faith, we do not worship Mary; she remains a creature, beloved by God. But we do honour her because she is the "*disciple par excellence*" – the perfect follower of Jesus. Everything she is and does points to him. So, through her, who knew him best, we come to know Christ more fully". (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae Apostolic Letter* (2002).

St. John Bosco said it another way "All my work began with a simple Hail Mary for Our Lady's help." So, the next time you are praying using either the Rosary or the Angel's salutation: stop, pause and reflect. Maybe break the prayer up into the three sections over a day...You will be richly Blessed.

Halina Holman ©

Pope Leo XIV

"Today is the day of the Prayer of Supplication to Our Lady of Pompeii. Our Mother Mary always wants to walk at our side, to remain close to us, to help us with her intercession and her love. So, I would like to pray together with you. Let us pray together for this new mission, for the whole Church, for peace in the world, and let us ask Mary, our Mother, for this special grace: Hail Mary..." **Rome 8th May 2025**

[Accompanied by the crowds in St Peter's Square and around the world.]

St. John Henry Newman

"No one has access to the Almighty as His mother has – none has merit such as hers. Her Son will deny her nothing that she asks and herein lies her power. While she defends the Church, neither height nor depth, neither men nor evil spirits, neither great monarchs, nor craft of man, nor popular violence, can avail to harm us – for human life is short, but Mary reigns above, a Queen for ever.



Feast Days in August

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| 1 st St. Alphonsus Mary Liguori | 2 nd St. Peter Julian Eymard |
| 3 rd Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | |
| 4 th St. Jean Marie Vianney | |
| 5 th Dedication of St. Mary Major Basilica | |
| 6 th Transfiguration of the Lord | |
| 8 th St. Dominic and St. Mary McKillop, Patron of Australia | |
| 9 th St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) Patron of Europe | |
| 10 th Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time | |
| 11 th St. Clare of Assisi | 14 th St. Maximilian Kolbe |
| 15 th Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Holy Day of Obligation | |
| 16 th St. Stephen of Hungary | |
| 17 th Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time | |
| 20 th St. Benard of Clairvaux | |
| 21 st St. Pope Pius X | |
| 22 nd The Queenship of Mary | 23 rd St. Rose of Lima |
| 24 th Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time | |
| 25 th St. Louis IX | 26 th Blessed Dominic Barberi |
| 27 th St. Monica | 28 th St. Augustine |
| 29 th The Beheading of John the Baptist | |
| 30 th St. Margaret Clitheroe, Anne Line & Margaret Ward | |
| 31 st Twenty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time | |

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