

# Men of Saint Michael

*“Iron sharpens iron, as one man sharpens another”*

Proverbs 27:17.



## Newsletter



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### *Kecharítomene*

“Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you” (Lk 1:28).

How many persons have greeted Mary with these happy words, pronounced for the first time at Nazareth? In how many languages and writings of the great human family?

Not long after her betrothal, Mary received an epoch-making revelation while she was at prayer in her home. The angel Gabriel appeared to her, probably in visible form, as he had to Zachery in the Holy Place of the Temple (Lk. 1:11). He greeted her with the words: “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women” (Lk. 1:28). Some think that the Greek word for “hail” (*chaire*) represents the salutation *Shalom*, meaning “peace,” “prosperity,” in common use among the Jews. However, the literal sense is *chaire*, “rejoice thou,” may be intended. For this exhortation is repeatedly found in the Prophets and rendered *chaire* in the Septuagint (Zeph 3:14-17; Joel 2:21; Zach 9:9; Lam 4:21). In this supposition, the very first word uttered by the angel suggests that he is a herald of spiritual happiness.

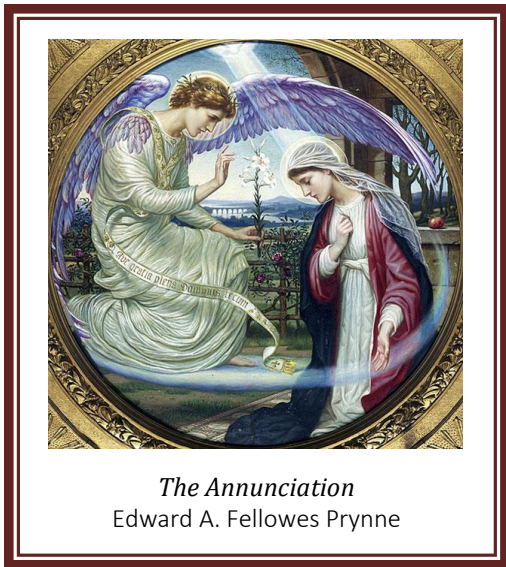
“*Full of Grace*” translates *kecharitōmēnē* the perfect passive participle of *charitōō*. It denotes one who has been and still is the object of divine benevolence, one who has been favored and continues to be favored by God,

one who has been granted supernatural grace and remains in this state.<sup>1</sup> Verbs ending in *ōō*, such as *haimatōō* (turn into blood), *thaumatōō* (fill with wonder), *spodōōmai* (burn to ashes) frequently express the full intensity of the action. *Kecharitomene* denotes continuance of a completed action.<sup>2</sup>

Hence, *kecharitōmēnē* has been suitably translated as “full of grace”, by the Vulgate and the Peshitto (The principal Syriac version of the Bible). This rendering expresses the conviction of the Church that the divine favor was fully bestowed on Mary, in the sense that she was ever immune from the least stain of sin and that she abounded in graces of the supernatural life and in all the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit which flow from that life.

“The Lord is with Thee” continued the angel, enunciating the fact that she enjoyed the effective divine assistance in all her endeavors for God’s glory, like Gideon, to whom a similar declaration was made and who crushed the foes of Israel as one man (Judges 6:12, 16). Gabriel concludes his address with “blessed art thou among women,” indicating that she occupied a unique position among the women of all nations and ages (Lk 1:28-29)

Mary was much confused by this salutation, far more than Zachary had been by the apparition of the angel in the Holy Place of the Temple. The cause of her confusion was not the praising character of Gabriel’s greeting, which her profound humility must have borne with equanimity, but the intimation conveyed by his words that she was selected for some great task the difficulty of which she viewed with apprehension. While she was pondering on the possible import of the message, the angel reassured her, addressing her familiarly by her name, bidding her not to fear and reaffirming the fact that she had found favor in God’s sight (Lk 1:30). Then he recounted the nature of the grace conferred upon her: “And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and give birth to a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give him the throne of David, his father. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob throughout the ages and his kingdom shall have no end” (Lk 1:30-31).



*The Annunciation*  
Edward A. Fellowes Prynne

Throughout her conversation with the angel, Mary displayed admirable virtues; simplicity, prudence, wisdom. When Gabriel finished speaking, Mary was confronted by the supreme test of her faith, obedience, and humility. Would she assent to the will of the Triune God, who did not wish to save the world without Mary, to become the Mother of the Divine Word in His human nature? Would she satisfy the yearnings of mankind for salvation, the hope of the angels for the redemption of man? Her answer to Gabriel was: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord! Be it done to me according to thy word” (Lk 1:38). This shows that her faith in the angel’s revelation was complete and unreserved, that her consent to be the Mother of God was not passive but active, unforced, absolutely free, that her humility was deep and her obedience wholehearted. At this moment the Incarnation took place, and the angel departed.

A precise translation of *kecharitōmēnē* is admittedly difficult. “Highly favored” is representative on most of the English phrases used by Protestant exegetes (students of the Bible). The word does not refer to physical appearance but signifies a singular grace given to the mother of the Messiah. Most admit that this passage signifies that God has endowed Mary with some outstanding prerogatives of character. The exceptions to this group consider “the grace” to be the privilege of her Messianic motherhood. Yet, in their view, even if this is a grace of character, it must have resided in Mary in a transitory way, for it does not remain with Christ’s mother to help conquer either her impatience at Cana or her infidelity as recorded in Mark’s third chapter (3:20-21, 31-35).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. L Cerfaux, *Gratia plena*, in *Mémoires et Rapports du Congrès Marial tenu à Bruxelles* (1921), Vol. I (Bruxelles, 1922), pp. 34-40.

<sup>2</sup> H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* [Harvard University Press, 1968], p. 108-109, sec 1852: b.

Mary's fiat expresses her humility; it expresses her free acceptance of the will of God for her place in the divine plan. However, Protestant exegetes are wary of going further and trying to discern in Mary's words the creature calling into existence by her consent God's Redemption. The fiat becomes primarily a literary figure, which concludes a passage. The Protestant, owing to a distrust of the idea that the creature is elevated in being and act by grace, approaches with great caution the possibility of Mary's participating intimately in redemption and salvation through her free but divinely aided consent.

The Catholic Church has pronounced definitively on very few texts. However, the following should offer us an idea of how the Catholic approach finds Mary in the gospels. Catholic exegesis shows how much lies in the words of the gospels, and at the same time it asks us to look at Mary in the context of her life and faith.

Was Mary herself a source for St. Luke's writings? His descriptions of private incidents such as the Annunciation, and his understanding of how Mary pondered the events of Christ's birth, lead many to think so. The chapters of Luke dealing with Mary and with the Incarnation poses a unique (possibly Hebraic) style. This tradition may have come ultimately from Mary.

Contemporary Catholic exegesis does not expect to find a detailed speculative theology openly contained in the words of Luke. For instance, it is not indicated that Mary's understanding of the unique character of Jesus was glimpsed by her in the same way as it was understood later in her life, or as it was understood by the Church at the time Luke was writing. As we will see, the words of the angel were primarily a suitable vehicle for introducing a young Jewish woman to a transcendent Messiah who was to be her son. Mary's mind comprehended slowly the ideas with which we are familiar. Current exegesis sees a wealth of Old Testament allusions and theological commentary by the early Christian community present in St. Luke. The first two chapters of Luke are a pattern of biblical themes. Over seventy Old Testament references can be found in these chapters.

In St. Luke's infancy narrative, we have two parallel stories: the coming of the Baptist and the incarnation of Jesus. There are two annunciations by Gabriel, the union of the mothers at the visitation, two births, two circumcisions, two important names. The incidents described by Luke form a series of pictures, ordered, balanced, presenting a total view of the coming of Jesus.

Another idea, that of Mary as the representative of Israel fulfilled in bringing forth the Messiah, is found in the opening words of the angelic message.

Gabriel's opening words were more meaningful to Mary than the Hail Mary is to our minds. His salutation is not a sympathetic greeting, but rather an emotionally charged salute, a cry of victory. The woman he greets is addressed by her biblical name, not Mary, but Kecharitōmēnē ("Full of Grace"). In the Old Testament the word for greeting used by the angelic force is a cry of victory. In the New Testament it is the greeting with which the soldiers mockingly give royal honor to Christ, and it is the word with which Jesus greets the women at the tomb after his resurrection. In the Old Testament it is employed only in the context which refers to the promised Messiah. Exegetes are translating this greeting (for which we have the foreign "Hail") as "Cry out for Joy." A triumphant psalm of the prophet Zephaniah uses this same exuberant greeting:

*Cry out for joy, daughter of Sion,  
Shout for Gladness, O Israel.  
Rejoice...O daughter of Jerusalem,  
Yahweh is king of Israel in your midst [literally, "in your womb"]  
...a mighty Savior (Zephaniah 3:18-20).*

Catholic exegetes see this passage as a basic inspiration behind the greeting to Mary. The same greeting is given to Mary; she is not only Sion but full of grace. God is within her in a unique way; he has come to his nation of Israel as Jesus who will save.

In the Old Testament the theological relationship was between Israel (personified in a feminine way) and God; now it is between Mary and God. Mary becomes all that is great and beneficial to man in the chosen race.

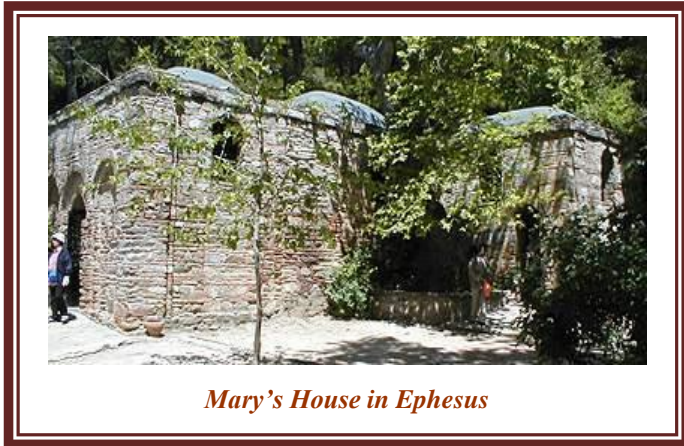
Just as biblical figures had unique names designating their individuality and mission, so Mary is addressed by her "scriptural name"—Full of Grace. This phrase personifies the Mother of the Redeemer in the divine economy. Some recent Catholic exegetes have seen in this phrase not a compliment to Mary for the way she has qualified

for her mission, but rather her privileged activity in the salvation of man. Without reacting from this point of view to one, which says the entire Catholic theology of sanctifying grace is unfolded in this title, Catholic exegetes still consider it as making Mary the special personification of divine favor. Her involvement with the coming Messiah somehow flows from her fullness of divine favor, from her preparedness to respond to what God will ask. Just as Israel has been prepared to give the world its savior, so has Mary, the apotheosis of Israel, been prepared in her spirit by God for the Incarnation. It is Luke, the companion of Paul, who is composing the gospel; his is the choice of words to relate the revealed reality.

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### *The Virgin Mary's House*

At the end of the road from the Magnesia Gate to the Bulbul Mountain (Mt. Koressos), you will come across the House of Virgin Mary.

According to the records of the Christian Council, Virgin Mary lived in this house until she died at the age of 64. It is widely believed that she left Jerusalem with St. John after Jesus was crucified. St. John wrote in

Bible that Virgin Mary was entrusted to him by Jesus himself before crucifixion. It was also recorded in the Council documents that she lived in a house next to the Council Church inside Ephesus before moving into the house on Bulbul Mountain.

It is known with certainty that the Virgin Mary went to Ephesus and lived there for some time. The belief that the Virgin Mary had spent her last days in the vicinity of Ephesus and that she had died there, focused attention on a nun named Anna Katherina Emmerich who had lived in the late 18th century (1774-1820). The efforts to find the house were greatly influenced by her detailed description of the Virgin Mary's coming to Ephesus, her life and her last home there and the characteristics of the city although she had never been to Ephesus.

The stigmatized German nun who had never been to Ephesus had a vision of the House of the Virgin Mary and described it in detail to the German writer Clemens Brentano who later published a book about it. Catherine Emmerich died in 1884. In 1891 Paul, Superior of the Lazarists from Izmir read about her vision and found a little building, which corresponded with Emmerich's descriptions. Archeological evidence showed that the little house was from the 6C AD but That the foundations were from the 1C AD.

This place was officially declared a shrine of the Roman Catholic Church in 1896, and since then it has become a popular place of pilgrimage.

Emmerich had seen in her visions the Virgin Mary leaving Jerusalem with St. John before the persecution of Christians had become worse and their coming to Ephesus; she had also seen that the house in Ephesus was on a mountain nearby and that the Christians who had settled there before lived in tents and caves. She said furthermore that St. John built the house of the Virgin Mary, a stone house, that it was rectangular in plan with a round back wall and had an apse and a hearth. The room next to the apse was her bedroom and there was a stream of water running it. Emmerich went on as follows:

"After completing her third year here she had a great desire to go to Jerusalem. John and Peter took her there. She was taken so ill and lost so much weight in Jerusalem that everybody thought she was going to die and they began preparing a grave for her. When the grave was finished, the Virgin Mary recovered. She was feeling strong enough to return to Ephesus.

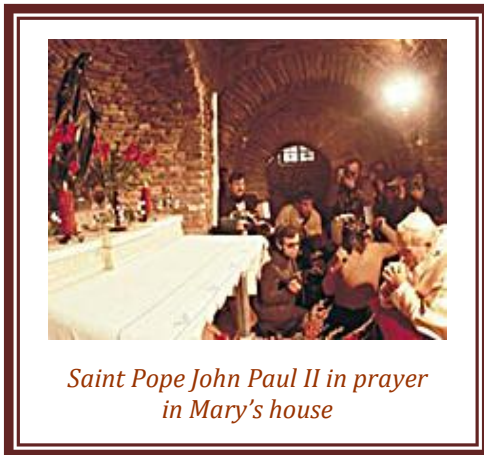
After returning to Ephesus, the Virgin Mary became very weak and at 64 years of age, she died. The saints around her performed a funeral ceremony for her and put the coffin they had specially prepared into a cave about two kilometers away from the house?"

Emmerich narrated that at this point in her vision St. Thomas coming there after the death of the Virgin Mary cried with sorrow because he had not been able to arrive in time. Whereupon his friends not wanting to hurt his feelings took him to the cave. In addition, she went on:

"When they came to the cave they prostrated themselves. Thomas and his friends walked impatiently to the door. St. John followed them. Two of them went inside after removing the bushes at the entrance of the cave and they kneeled down in front of the grave. John neared the coffin of which a part was protruding from the grave and unlacing its ties, he opened the lid. When they all approached the coffin, they were stunned in amazement: Mary's corpse was not in the shroud. However, the shroud had remained intact. After this event the mouth of the cave containing the grave was closed and the house was turned into a chapel."

A French clergyman named Gouyet who after reading in 1880 C. Brentano's book "The Life of the Virgin Mary" containing the revelations of Anna Katherina Emmerich tried to prove these by his writings but was not successful. Gouyet decided to go Ephesus to see whether the house mentioned as belonging to the Virgin Mary fitted the description in the book or not. Monsignor Timoni, the archbishop of Izmir of the time, supported him in his idea and gave him a helper. After a journey free from problems in contrast to his expectations, Gouyet saw the house, believed that it belonged to the Virgin Mary and sent his related report to Bishopric authorities of Paris and even to Rome, but he did not receive the attention he had expected.

About ten years after this event, H. Jung, a Lazarist priest who had read in Anna Katherina Emmerich's book the chapters relating to the life and death of Virgin Mary in Ephesus, decided that it would be useful to see the house in its place. With the encouragement of Sister Marie de Mandat Grancey, the head nurse of the French Hospital of Izmir, he organized a second research team with the collaboration of Eugene Poulin, a Lazarist priest who was the director of the French College of Izmir and who had studied Emmerich's book. The team consisting



of two priests and two Catholic functionaries set out on 27 June 1891. The team successfully found the House of Virgin Mary, they had discovered a small place of worship with the roof fallen in and the walls in ruin standing a statue of the Virgin Mary with the hands broken off. Nowhere else in the region was there a scene fitting the description as perfectly as this one did. They returned to Izmir. The priest E. Poulin, although he did not quite believe the narrative of his colleague Jung, decided to go to Ephesus to see out on the journey and on his return, he let work begin for the necessary scientific research. With four friends he went up the Bulbul Mountain again, they took various photographs of the place for a week. Meanwhile, the archbishop of Izmir Monsignor Timoni showed interest in the matter. He organized a team consisting of seven priests and five specialists. This team went up to the house of the

Virgin Mary in December 1892 and substantiated the situation by a duly signed document (History of Panaya Kapulu).

After the priest Jung set out on his first expedition, Sister Marie de Mandat Grancey exerted herself for nearly ten months to obtain the right of possession of his land and tried in her own capacity to repair the building and arrange the surrounding area. The restoration and other works continued until 1894. A shelter for visitors was built as an annex to the building.

This place of pilgrimage visited by thousands of tourists every year, maintains its holiness for the Moslems as well as for the Christian world. People believing in the godly qualities of the Virgin Mary came here and drinking from the water believed to be sacred, they make wishes in the mystic and quite atmosphere of Mount Aladag.

A major recognition of the house was sealed in 1967 when Pope Paul VI visited and prayed in the house. Later on, Pope John II visited the house and confirmed again the significance of the house for Christianity.

Recently, the site is widely accepted as a pilgrimage place for Christians.

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## *A short dialogue with a Protestant about Mary.*

George asked, “What about your worshiping Mary or praying to the saints, or the baptism of babies, or praying to statues...?”

“Whoa,” I said, “let’s take them one at a time. Let’s start with Mary, the Mother of Jesus. What is your question?”

George responded, “Why do you worship Mary? Jesus referred to her by saying ‘who is my Mother...’ It doesn’t appear in Scripture that she was as special as you Catholics believe her to be.”

“Let’s look at this from a logical perspective,” I said. “To begin with, Catholics do not worship Mary in any way, shape or form. As you know, the commandment teaches that we are to worship God and God alone. The Catholic Church literally condemns the worship of anything or anyone other than God in Trinity. I must admit that we Catholics hold Mary in the highest regard, but in doing so we are simply emulating God.”

“How so?” George inquired.

“Consider this,” I said, “Jesus (as God) created His own Mother. Do you agree?”

“Well, I must admit that I have never thought of it in that way, but yes, I suppose we could say that He did”, said George.

I continued, “Now, if you were God, and decided to create your own Mother, the Mother of the Incarnation, would you not make her perfect in every way?”

George, once again, agreed.

“The Bible tells us that nothing unclean will enter heaven, (Revelation 21:27). Doesn’t it stand to reason that if nothing profane can be in God’s divine presence in heaven, then God would not come into the world in a soiled vessel?”

“The Catholic Church teaches that Mary was conceived in her mother’s womb, without the taint of the sin of Adam, which we call Original Sin. She would have to have been pure in every way or it would be an affront to God’s majesty. We call this doctrine the ‘Immaculate Conception.’

“Now, let’s go on.” I said. “God gave us the Ten Commandments, one of which tells us to ‘Honor our Father and Mother’, is this not so?” George nodded his head in agreement. “Don’t you think that Jesus would have followed this commandment concerning His Mother to the fullest, when as God He could do no less?”

“Yes, I guess so,” said George.

“In this regard it would have been a rejection of His own commandment if He allowed His Mother to come under the power of Satan even for an instant.” Again, I asked, “Doesn’t this make sense?”, and once again George nodded his head.

“OK, so you agree that Mary was conceived without sin and remained sinless her entire life, is this not so?”

“Well, yes, I suppose so, it does seem reasonable”, said George reluctantly.

I could tell by the look on George's face that he wasn't sure he liked where I was going with this line of thought.

I continued, "What loving son would refuse his mother any request within his power to grant? Remember the Miracle at Cana? Mary came to Jesus and said that the wedding party had run out of wine. Jesus responded that it was not yet His time, but Mary continued and said to the chief steward, 'Do whatever He tells you.' It seems to me that Jesus had made it quite clear that He was not ready to reveal His miraculous powers, but as a dutiful Son, He could not refuse His loving mother.

"This is why Catholics pray to Mary. Not because we believe that she has any miraculous power. She cannot heal our infirmities, forgive our sins, or grant us salvation. This can only be accomplished by God. What Mary can do is intercede for us with her Son. We believe that, while every Christian, in a state of grace has intercessory power, Mary alone is 'full of grace' and all generations will call her blessed."

George interrupted, "But Jesus said that He alone was the way to the Father. Why do we have to go through Mary?"

"We don't have to go through Mary," I responded. "Nothing prevents us from going to Jesus directly in prayer. But, we believe that the prayers of the righteous are apt to be more favorably answered, assuming that we are acting within the will of God.

"Paul continually exhorts the early Christians to pray for one another. As Mary and the other saints in heaven are truly alive, maybe more so than when they were on earth, they can pray and intercede for us. Don't you think those that are in heaven would be continually praying for those of us still struggling through our lives?"

"Well, I suppose so," answered George, "I have just not thought of this in that way."

"If you had the choice between asking me to pray for you, or of our Blessed Mother, whom would you choose?"

"Well," said George, "No offense intended, I would have to choose Mary."

"None taken," I said, with a smile.

"To sum up, George, we Catholics believe that Mary was conceived without sin, remained sinless throughout her life and that as the Mother of our Savior, she is also our Mother, for we too, are children of God.

"God chose Mary above every other human being who would ever live to be the Mother of His son. He honored her above every other creature; don't you think that we should also?"

"Yes, I agree", said George, this time with conviction.

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### *The Four Marys*

Many non-Catholic Christians believe the Blessed Virgin Mary had children after the birth of Jesus (see Matt. 12:46; Mark 3:32; Luke 8:19; John 2:12). Papias clears up the confusion:

Mary, the mother of the Lord; Mary, the wife of Cleophas or Alpheus, who was the mother of James the bishop and apostle, and of Simon and Thaddeus, and of one Joseph; Mary Salome, wife of Zebedee, mother of John the

evangelist and James; Mary Magdalene. These four are found in the Gospel. James and Judas and Joseph were sons of an aunt of the Lord's. James also and John were sons of another aunt of the Lord's. Mary, mother of James the less and Joseph, wife of Alpheus, was the sister of Mary, the mother of the Lord, whom John names of Cleophas, either from her father or from the family of the clan, or for some other reason. Mary Salome is called Salome either from her husband or her village. Some affirm that she is the same as Mary of Cleophas, because she had two husbands.

– The Fragments of Papias (second century AD)

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### *St. Thomas Aquinas' prayer to the most Blessed Virgin Mary*

St. Thomas Aquinas wrote a prayer to the most Blessed Virgin Mary, expressing his own need for help and dependence upon her as his *mediatrix*. From this prayer, several pages in length, I quote a few brief excerpts:

O most blessed and sweet Virgin Mary,  
Mother of God, filled with all tenderness,  
Daughter of the most high King,  
Lady of the Angels,  
Mother of all the faithful,

On this day and all the days of my life,  
I entrust to your merciful heart my body and my soul,  
all my acts, thoughts, choices,  
desires, words, deeds,  
my entire life and death,

So that, with your assistance,  
all may be ordered to the good  
according to the will of your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ....

From your beloved Son...  
request for me the grace to resist firmly  
the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil....

My most holy Lady,  
I also beseech you to obtain for me  
true obedience and true humility of heart

So that I may recognize myself truly  
as a sinner--wretched and weak--  
and powerless,  
without the grace and help of my Creator  
and without your holy prayers....

Obtain for me as well,  
O most sweet Lady,  
true charity with which from the depths of my heart  
I may love your most holy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,



and, after Him,  
love you above all other things....

Grant, O Queen of Heaven,  
that ever in my heart  
I may have fear and love alike  
for your most sweet Son....  
I pray also that, at the end of my life,  
you,

Mother without compare,  
Gate of Heaven and Advocate of sinners....  
will protect me with your great piety and mercy....  
and obtain for me, through the blessed and glorious Passion of your Son  
and through your own intercession,  
received in hope, the forgiveness of all my sins.

When I die in your love and His love,  
may you direct me  
into the way of salvation and blessedness.

Amen.



### *Marriage of the Virgin*

There is an ancient tradition that when the time came for the Virgin Mary to be betrothed her guardians ordered lots to be drawn, so that God himself might choose a worthy spouse for the ward of the Temple. The order was that the candidates for Mary's hand should each place a branch of an almond tree overnight in the Temple. When morning came and all were assembled at the appointed place, it was found that the smooth branch of Joseph, son of Jacob, had blossomed into a beautiful flower and leaf. This sign was held by all as a testimony of Joseph's worthiness.

### *History of the "Hail Mary"*

The "Hail Mary," as we now recite it, dates from the year 1515; originally it consisted only of the salutations of the Archangel and St. Elizabeth. Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) ordered this primitive "Hail Mary" to be said at the offertory of the Mass on the fourth Sunday in Advent. There we find it as follows: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."

In the thirteenth century it was recited after the "Our Father" in the beginning of the divine office. Pope Urban IV, in 1263, added the holy name of Jesus after the scriptural sentence, as the devotion of the faithful introduced the name of Mary after the greeting.

The addition, “Holy Mary, pray for us sinners, amen!” was made in 1508, and the Franciscans were accustomed to add to the Hail Mary, “hour of our death.” A few years later, Pius V showed his approval of the prayer, as we now have it, by allowing its insertion in the Roman Breviary.

From the time of the Crusades it became the custom to say the “Hail Mary every morning, noon, and night at the sound of the church bells.

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### *The Angelus* (also called the Ave Maria)

The Angelus, or the ringing of the bell three times a day, was introduced by Pope Urban II, in the year 1095, to call down the protection of Mary on the crusaders, and was then retained, in order to thank God three times a day for the blessings of redemption through Christ.

The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary;  
And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.  
Hail Mary...  
Behold the handmaid of the Lord.  
Be it done to me according to your word.  
Hail Mary...  
And the Word was made flesh,  
And dwelt among us.  
Hail Mary...  
Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,  
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.  
Let us pray.

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ, your Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by his passion and cross be brought to the glory of his resurrection, through the same Christ our Lord.

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### *Mariolatry*

Enemies of the Church, through ignorance or malice, often accuse Catholics of worshipping Mary. There is no excuse for making such a charge. In the sixth century the Church condemned as heretics a sect of men, called the Collyridians, who worshiped Mary as a divinity, thus emphatically repudiating the act of Mariolatry.

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### *The Council of Ephesus, (431 AD)*

Defined the true unity of Christ, declared Mary the Mother of God, and renewed the condemnation of Pelagius who denied Original Sin and the necessity of grace.

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## *Titles of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

Mother of God,  
Lily of Israel,  
Ark of the Covenant,  
Star of the Sea,  
The Immaculate Conception,  
Mother of the Lord,  
The Morning Star,  
Queen of Patriarchs,  
Queen of Prophets,  
Queen of the Apostles,  
Queen of All Saints,  
Queen of Martyrs;  
Queen of Virgins,  
Queen of Heaven  
Mother of the Church,  
Mother of the Eucharist,  
Ever Blessed,  
Daughter of God,  
Tabernacle of the Most High,  
Gate of Grace,  
Only Daughter of Life,  
The Fountain of all Divine Grace,  
Born of God,  
The New Heaven,  
The Sweet Ointment,  
Mother of the Redeemer,  
Mother of Sorrows,  
Mother of the Secret.

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As Mary was nearest to Christ in suffering, so is she nearest to him in glory. Her place is at the right hand of the Redeemer who will come to judge all the children of Adam.

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## *The Rosary*

The Rosary is the queen of Catholic devotions. It is the spiritual solace of Catholics. It is a compendium of Christian doctrine. It embraces both mental and oral prayer. The devout practice of this devotion preserves and enlivens faith; leads through Mary to Jesus; unfolds to the minds of Mary's children the treasures the truth and grace hidden in the life of her soul. The devotion is so extensive within the Catholic Church that over 150 papal briefs have been issued in favor of this devotion. Pope urban VIII called the Rosary the multiplier of Christians. Gregory XIV called it the destruction of sin and the procurer of the grace and glory of God. Paul; V called it "the treasury of Grace." Julius III called it the "tree of life."

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## *Do We Really Need a Spiritual Mother?*

Father Kilian McGowan, C.P.

In the search for Christian Perfection there are certain basic laws of progress. When you flaunt these laws, you invite spiritual mediocrity. The most fundamental of these laws is that our life must be centered on Jesus Christ-for He is the ONLY way to eternal life. Secondly, Our Christ-life will be the most perfect as it grows and develops under the influence of Mary, His Mother.

At the foot of Calvary, as the life of her divine Son ebbed away, Mary accepted a mission that was inseparable from the Motherhood of our Blessed Lord. For the dying Savior gave His mother not only to the Apostle John, but to each of us when He said: "Behold thy mother!" Therefore, we cannot truly appreciate her role in the plan of redemption without a deep understanding of her function as our spiritual mother.

With Mary's acceptance of this mission in the hour of her greatest sorrow, God created in her heart a love for us of infinite tenderness, of undying devotion, and of profound affection. You were given the most understanding, the most self-sacrificing, the most loving of mothers. Her mother's heart is merciful, understanding, vigilant, and unchanging in its love for each of us.

Of all the children of Eve, our Blessed Lady most perfectly fulfills the function of motherhood. Thus, when we call Mary, "Mother"-in a very true sense we have said everything that can be said to her! She is physical mother of Christ and spiritual mother of all Christians. She mothers spiritually all men called to share in the life that her Son came to pour out so abundantly.

What should your response be to the truth of Mary's spiritual motherhood? You should approach her with the heart and spirit of a child. The humility, the spirit of confident trustfulness, the dependence (here in the spiritual realm) of a child should characterize our love. Each of her children will express his love in accord with his nature, of course, but the interior love must be there.

This devotedness should be a persistent and habitual thing. Mary is not our spiritual mother now and then - she is ALWAYS our spiritual mother. True devotion to our Blessed Mother is more than an occasional "Hail Mary." It's not just rattling off a prayer in times of a spiritual or temporal crisis.

True devotion to Our Blessed Mother means a permanent state of mind and a habitual manner of acting. It's something that fills every hour of every day - just like a child's relationship to his mother! You should turn to her always, depend on her with confidence, and lean on her wise guidance.

The words of the great Apostle St. Paul sum up perfectly the function of Our Blessed Lady in your life. He said: "My little children, for whom I am in labor until Christ be formed in you." If this be so true of the Apostle Paul, how much more true it is of the Mother of Christ. She is in constant and perpetual labor, as it were, to bring forth even more perfectly, the likeness of Christ, her divine Son in our hearts and lives.

St. Bernard sums up the great spiritual advantage of true devotedness to our Blessed Mother in the following consoling sentences:

"By following her, you will not go astray.  
By praying to her you will not despair.  
By thinking of her you will not make a mistake.  
Supported by her, you will not fail.  
Under her protection, you will no longer be afraid.  
Guided by her, you will never grow weary.  
Having her benevolence, you are assured of salvation."

"Your Way to God", by Fr. Kilian McGowan, Chapter 26, pp. 76-78, Published by Newman Press, New York, Paramus, NJ, Toronto. Used with permission.

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