



*“The greatest method of
praying is to pray the Rosary.”*

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

The Prayer in Culture

Having been a central prayer for countless Christians across millennia, it is not a surprise that the Hail Mary has had influence in other areas of culture as well, including music, art, and even sports. For example, the phrase “Hail Mary pass” became widely used after famed Dallas Cowboys quarterback Roger Staubach made a 1975 game-winning pass and later told reporters, “It was just a Hail Mary pass, a very, very lucky play” (“Celebrating Football’s Greatest Hail Marys,” espn.com). Fifty years before that, legendary coach Knute Rockne originated the term with the famous 1922 Notre Dame football team.

A Soundtrack to Prayer

Because of its ability to draw us closer to Jesus through the intercession of his mother, the Hail Mary provides the soundtrack to the narrative of popular prayers such as the Rosary and the Angelus.

The Rosary, in particular, is a prayer of the Gospels, with the mysteries and stories of the life of Jesus Christ as the focal point of the prayers of the Rosary. When we pray the Rosary, oftentimes the repeated Hail Mary prayers become like background music to our mindful meditations of the joyful, luminous, sorrowful, and glorious sets of mysteries which themselves are based on Scripture.

Rather than vain repetition, the prayerful repetition of the Hail Mary allows us to share in the very joy of God himself who first sent these words to the Mother of God though the angel Gabriel and St. Elizabeth.

Ways to Pray the Hail Mary each day:

- Say a Hail Mary first thing in the morning.
- Teach children the Hail Mary by saying it as a family at mealtimes.
- Repeat the Hail Mary as you are falling asleep each night.
- Pray the Hail Mary when driving.
- Visit www.RosaryArmy.com for more ways to pray the Hail Mary.

The Hail Mary

(in English and Latin)

English:

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.

Latin:

AVE MARIA, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.
Benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus
ventris tui, Iesus.
Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus,
nunc, et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.



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By Greg Willits

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Hail Mary

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“If we make ourselves worthy
of the greeting and blessings of Our Lady
we shall certainly be filled with graces
and a flood of spiritual consolations will
come down into our souls.”

— ST. LOUIS DE MONTFORT

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A Prayer for the Centuries

The Hail Mary is a profound prayer with deeply scriptural origins that has endured centuries of schisms, attacks, and difficulties yet remains as strong, vibrant, and needed in today’s world as ever before. It is a prayer of hope for the lonely, the lost, and the suffering. In its simplicity can be found guidance and comfort for families, communities, and individuals, including those who may not initially see the benefit of seeking the prayers of Mary.

Despite often cited misgivings and misunderstandings, the Hail Mary is not a prayer for Catholics alone. Developed from the Gospel of Luke, with Christ at the center, the Hail Mary is in fact appreciated and recited by Christians of multiple faiths.

A Renewed Clarion Call

In his heartfelt apostolic letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, Pope St. John Paul II lovingly describes the Hail Mary as a prayer offering great praise to Jesus Christ to whom “the act of love is ultimately directed” (26). We do this, as St. John Paul II explains, with Mary and through Mary. This is accomplished in the same way that Christ came into the world: through Mary, and through her “yes” to God.

As with all devotions to the Blessed Mother, Mary always directs our gaze to her son, Jesus. She neither wants nor keeps any attention to herself, and the Hail Mary is an example of her role in keeping Jesus at the center of our lives and interceding on our behalf to her Son.

Jesus at the Center

The simple two-part structure of the Hail Mary begins with praise directed to God. In the second half we ask Mary to pray for us, just as we may ask our own mother, father, friends, and relatives to pray for us in times of need and times of joy.

Knowing that the members of the Church comprise the Body of Christ, with Jesus as the head, we seek the mother of Christ as our own Mother as we pray:

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.

Structure of the Prayer

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

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* instructs that the first part of the Hail Mary “‘magnifies’ the Lord for the ‘great things’ he did for his lowly servant” (see Lk 1:46-55) while the second part “entrusts the supplications and praises of the children of God to the Mother of Jesus” (2675).

The first words of the Hail Mary (*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee*) are originally found in the Gospel of Luke as God greets Mary through the angel Gabriel (see Lk 1:28).

Mary is full of grace because she is “filled [with] the presence of him who is the source of all grace.” Through this fullness 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” (CCC, 2676).

Furthermore, St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that Mary is an example of all virtues, and, being full of grace, she is the perfect model of how we may live out a heroic life of virtue in our own efforts toward sainthood. For example, Aquinas points out that we see her as the example of humility in Luke 1:38 as she proclaims, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.”

In other words, it was God himself — through the angel Gabriel — who first said these words to Mary, pointing out the fullness of virtue. So in beginning the prayer of the Hail Mary, we are reciting God’s words as we call out to her for help in living out these same virtues. Pope St. John Paul II went so far as to say that the words of the Hail Mary express “the wonder of heaven and earth; they could be said to give us a glimpse of God’s own wonderment as he contemplates his ‘masterpiece’ — the Incarnation of the Son in the womb of the Virgin Mary” (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 33).



*Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy
womb, Jesus.*

In the next stanza, taken from the first chapter of Luke, we pray the words of her kinswoman Elizabeth who refers to Mary as “blessed among women.” Our prayer continues as we also acknowledge the blessing of Jesus Christ in Mary’s womb.

*Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Pray for us sinners, now and at
the hour of our death.
Amen.*

By following through the second half of the prayer, again with Jesus Christ at the center, we then seek the loving intercession of Holy Mary, the Mother of God, asking her to plea on our behalf to her Son, knowing that she remains in his presence in heaven. This part of the prayer, in which we ask her to pray for us sinners, is similar to asking others to pray for us here on earth. The difference is in seeking this intercession from her whom God himself acknowledged by saying “the Lord is with thee.”



Rejoice!
The opening word of the prayer, “Hail,” has the literal translation of “rejoice.” When we pray the Hail Mary, we too are called to rejoice over the gift of Jesus Christ, miraculously given to the world through the Virgin Mary.

