

PRAYER PROMPT

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Church encourages devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary every May. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) teaches that Mary is our Mother “in the order of grace” (par. 968). She is a beloved mother whom Jesus gave to John—and to all disciples—from the Cross (John 19:26-27). The *Ave Maria*, or *Hail Mary*, is both a prayer of love and a tutorial on devotion to Mary.

A Devotional Look at the *Hail Mary*

“Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.” These biblically based words capture part of the Annunciation account. When praying these words, we repeat the very words of God spoken through the angel to Mary. They announce God’s delight and favor (Luke 1:28) with Mary, acknowledging that her being is full of grace, revealing her Immaculate Conception.

“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.” These words of Elizabeth to Mary at the Visitation are inspired by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:42). Mary is a model of faith. The *Catechism* states, “Mary is ‘blessed among women’ because she believed in the fulfillment of the Lord’s word. ...because of her faith, became the mother of believers, through whom all...receive Him who is God’s own blessing: Jesus...” (par. 2676). Elsewhere, it notes: “The name of Jesus is at the heart of every Christian prayer. ...The *Hail Mary* reaches its high point in the words ‘blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus’” (par. 435).

“Holy Mary, Mother of God...” Mary’s title of “Mother of God” is grounded in the Gospel of Luke and the Council at Ephesus in 431. The *Catechism* stresses: “In fact, the One whom she conceived as man by the Holy Spirit, who truly became her Son according to the flesh, was none other than the Father’s eternal son, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Hence the Church confesses that Mary is truly ‘Mother of God’ (*Theotokos*)” (par. 495).

“Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of death. Amen.” This petition recalls Mary’s prayers and presence at the crucifixion. Just as she prayed at Jesus’ death, Christians invoke her aid to do the same for them. The Church has great confidence in Mary’s intercession, help and protection. We rejoice in what God has done through our Mother in giving us Jesus. And we invoke her help in our daily life, even at our death.

Discover the *Catechism*’s teaching on Mary in paragraphs 484-511, plus instruction on the *Hail Mary* in paragraphs 2676-2677.

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