

Sword of Truth

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SEPTEMBER 12 - FEAST OF THE HOLY NAME OF MARY

STAR OF THE SEA - excerpt taken from *Mary, The Blessed The Beloved* by Rev. Timothy Harris 1951

The feast of the sweet Name of Mary comes to us with the clash of arms and the tumult of battle. It commemorates the great battle of Vienna fought on the September 12, 1683, when the Turks were repulsed in their last effort to subdue Western Europe. The campaign which preceded the battle had been placed under the protection of Mary, and the Christian army, much inferior in numbers, fought under the banner of the Virgin. In thanksgiving for the victory, Pope Innocent XI established the feast of the Most Holy Name of Mary to be observed by the whole church on the 12th of September, the anniversary of the battle.

The word *Mary* is the same as the Hebrew *Miriam* - the name of the sister of Moses. Its meaning is doubtful but that now generally accepted by scholars is "Lady," or "Perfect One." The older interpretation was "Star of the Sea," and this beautiful and expressive title has taken a fixed place in the prayers and hymns of the Liturgy and in devotional literature. St. Bernard's commentary on the name of Mary is, perhaps, the most familiar of his eloquent tributes to Our Lady:

"'And the virgin's name was Mary.' Let us say a few words upon this name, which being interpreted, is said to be the 'Star of the Sea,' a name which is most fitly applied to the Mother who was a Virgin. Aptly is she compared to a star, for even as the star sheds its ray without corruption, so did Mary without hurt to her virginity bring forth her Son. And as the ray does not lessen the brightness of the star, so neither does the Son lessen His Mother's maidenhood. She, then, is that noble Star, risen out of Jacob, whose ray enlightens the whole world, whose brightness shines in heaven and reaches down into hell; and by warming the souls of men, rather than their bodies, fosters virtue and melts away vice. Mary, I say, is that exceeding bright and glorious Star raised up over the great wide sea of this world's needs, shining by her merits, giving light by her example.

"O thou, whosoever thou art, who understands that thou art carried along on the waters of a troubled and storm-tossed sea more truly than that thou walkest on firm earth - turn not thine eyes away from this bright Star, if thou wouldst not be overwhelmed by the hurricane! If the waves of temptation rise up against thee, call upon Mary! If thou art tossed to and fro by the waves of pride, or of ambition, or of falsehood, or of envy, look up to the Star, call upon Mary! If anger, or avarice, or the allurements of the flesh run foul of thy soul's little bark, look up to Mary! If thou art troubled by the heinousness of sin, confounded by the foulness of thy conscience, terrified by exceeding fear of the judgment to come - if thou begin to sink in the gulf of unavailing regret, in the abyss of despair, think of Mary! In dangers, in straits, in doubts, think of Mary, call upon Mary!

"Oh! let her not be absent from thy lips, nor far away from thy heart! And that thou mayest obtain the suffrage of her prayer, never do thou forsake the example of her life and conversation. Follow her and thou wilt not wander from the right way; ask for her help and thou wilt not despair; think of her and thou wilt not err; if she lead thee on, thou wilt never weary; if she show thee favor, thou wilt reach thy home. Thus in thy very self thou wilt have proof how rightly it was said: 'And the virgin's name was Mary.'"

The name of a person is often used in Scripture to denote the person himself. It reminds us of his character, qualities and actions. It calls up his image and evokes the sentiments we should feel in his presence. So it is with the Most Holy Name of Mary. The simple word brings to our mind that lovely vision of holiness embodied in a woman's form - "This example of all womanhood,

So mild, so merciful, so strong, so good, so patient, peaceful, loyal, loving, pure,"

-or that other vision of the Woman clothed with the sun, with the moon at her feet, and a crown of stars about her

head. It recalls to us the sublime privileges of the Virgin Mother of God - her Immaculate Conception and sinlessness, her fullness of grace and perfection of virtue; her unique possession of mother's love combined with maiden purity. As we repeat that name the sweet scenes of the Gospel are unfolded before our eyes - the message of the angel and the Virgin's faltering consent, the salutation of St. Elizabeth and Mary's Magnificat, Bethlehem with its joys and sorrows, the Hidden Life and its sacred intimacies, Cana and the first miracle, Calvary and the Mother of Sorrows at the foot of the Cross. Lastly, that name summarises the special relations which exist between Mary and ourselves. Every Ave Maria that we repeat is an act of homage to her who is our Queen, an appeal to her who is our Advocate and a greeting to her who is our Mother.

Next to the name of Jesus, then, no name should be so dear to us as that of Mary. It should be often on our lips and at all times in our hearts. If we love to repeat it during life we shall have its comfort and strength at the hour of death. "Glorious and admirable is thy Name, O Mary," says St. Bonaventure. "Those who repeat it need not fear the powers of hell, for the devils on hearing that name flee and leave the soul in peace." It is the power of Mary that the feast of her Most Holy Name specially commemorates, and that power Mary will not fail to exercise when we need it most.

**"Hail to thee, next to Godhead's awful height,
O Rose, O Star, our Hope when threatened most,
Fair as the sun, yet terrible in might -
As an embattled host!"**

Ave Maria! by Bishop Robert F. McKenna, O.P.

After the "Our Father" there is no more beautiful, or more powerful prayer than the "Hail Mary," its fitting companion. In the first we pray to our heavenly Father, and in the second to our heavenly Mother, the Mother of God.

Both prayers come directly from heaven: the "Our Father" from the lips of Christ Himself, for which reason it is named The Lord's Prayer; and the "Hail Mary" from the mouth of the Angel Gabriel at the Annunciation, and so named the Angelic Salutation.

The "Hail Mary" is composed of two parts. In the first, we have the praise of Mary, and in the second, we pray to her beginning with the words, "Holy Mary."

"Hail Mary!" An angel - indeed one of the seven highest, as mentioned in the Apocalypse, who stand before the throne of God - salutes a lowly, unknown, village maiden, who makes of herself no more than a "handmaid of the Lord." He salutes her, however, who precisely because of her humility and chastity, has been chosen from all eternity to be the very Mother of the Lord - the Lord of the heavenly hosts, the Word Incarnate. Was ever there a happier greeting for all mankind than this?

"Full of Grace" - full of that grace which we call Sanctifying Grace, that supernatural gift of God which makes the soul holy and pleasing in His sight, grace proportionate to Mary's vocation to be the Mother of God and therefore the greatest possible to a mere creature, whether man or Angel, after that of Christ Himself. In this fulness of grace was Mary not only born but conceived. She is The Immaculate Conception, preserved by the foreseen merits of her Son from all stain of Original Sin. Nor was her fullness of grace ever dimmed by even a venial sin.

"Hail, full of grace!" The Angel does not greet her by name but salutes her simply as "full of grace", as if that itself were her name and the equivalent of "Mary." St. Louis Marie de Montfort for his part says that in the beginning God collected all the waters that covered the earth at creation and called it, in Latin, "Maria" - that is to say, the seas - and in the case of Our Lady a collection of all His graces and called it "Maria" - Mary.

But indeed, the name of Mary is so rich in meaning. St. Bernard tells us it means "Star of the Sea" - from heaven Mary is our guiding star in the stormy seas of this life - while St. Jerome tells us her name means "Lady," which is the feminine form in Latin for "Lord" (Domina). Most fittingly and tenderly do we call her Our Lady, the companion of Our Lord.

"The Lord is with thee." Sanctifying grace is nothing less than a created share in the life of God Himself, making us participators, as the Apostle Peter tells us, in the Divine Nature. Yet these words are not a mere repetition of the words already spoken - "full of grace" - but they anticipate the Virgin's consent to be the Mother of God. At the moment of her "Fiat" - "Be it done to me according to thy word" - the Lord, the Son of God Himself, was with her, incarnate in body and soul.

"Blessed art thou among women." This is the same as to say, "the most blessed among women" - among all whoever were or will be. What woman or even earthly queen can compare with the Queen of Heaven, the Mother of its King? Under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, St. Elizabeth repeated these words of the Angel at the Visitation, earth thus joining heaven in the praise of God's mother.

"And blessed is the fruit of thy womb." These words, ending the first part of the Hail Mary, come not from the Angel but from Elizabeth, when at the sound of her cousin's salutation, the child in her own womb, John the Baptist, leapt for joy and was cleansed from Original Sin. So indeed does earth join heaven in the joyful praise of Mary, the New Eve. By her faith, humility, and obedience she repairs the sin of the first Eve who heeded the serpent. And it was "with a loud voice," the Gospel tells us, that Elizabeth exclaimed those words, signifying with what fervor we ourselves should bless the Blessed Virgin.

"The fruit of thy womb, Jesus." This is said of course metaphorically - by way of comparison. In her liturgy the Church applies to Our Lady the words of Scripture, "Like a vine I have brought forth the fruit of a sweet fragrance." Do we now, ourselves, taste the sweetness of that fruit in the Holy Eucharist?

The name "Jesus," ending the first half of the "Hail Mary," along with the rest of the prayer in the second half, was added by the Church. "Jesus", meaning "Saviour", was the name given by the Angel - the name which as Peter told the Jews, "is above all names," and "besides which there is no other given to men under heaven by which we must be saved."

The **"Holy Mary,"** beginning the second part of the Hail Mary, is the spontaneous response that we should have to the greatness and praise of the Blessed Virgin voiced in the first part by the Angel Gabriel and St. Elizabeth. Seeing by comparison our own nothingness - worse still our sinfulness - we cry to her for help, for the all-powerful intercession of the **"Mother of God."** In that most glorious title of Our Lady, as in a nutshell, is the stupendous mystery of the Incarnation. Wonder of wonders! - that the Almighty God should have a mother, only because He chose to become man for our salvation. What mercy and condescension on His part - what majesty and exaltation of Mary on hers!

"Pray for us sinners!" With what ardor should we say these words, humbling ourselves in proportion as we exalt Mary's divine maternity. We should also be animated by the knowledge that we too, though ever so unworthy, are her children. Her divine Son gave us to her care in the person of St. John the Apostle, "the disciple whom Jesus loved", when standing at the foot of the Cross He said to them, "Behold thy mother; behold thy son." Humility is the key to God's heart, Who, as it is written, "resists the proud and gives grace to the humble." The greater our sinfulness and misery, and the greater our conviction of it, so much the greater our claim on Mary's help.

"Now and at the hour of our death." We need her intercession "now" - at this and every moment. She is the Mother of Grace - the mediatrix with her divine Son of every grace we need and receive. As He is our "one mediator" with God the Father, so is she, in the plan of God, our mediator in turn with Christ His Divine Son, and her own.

"And at the hour of our death." Then especially will we need her help, in that dread hour when the devil will make his last supreme effort to claim our soul. To die in the State of Grace is the grace of Final Perseverance - assurance of our salvation. It is a grace that cannot be merited but must be obtained by prayer.

How often, then, and with what devotion we should pray the Hail Mary! In the 15 decades of the Most Holy Rosary, given to us by Our Lady through the hand of St. Dominic, Rosarians (members of the Rosary Confraternity) say it no less than 150 times each week. Better still, Our Lady of Fatima would have us say the Rosary - her "Aves" (joined with meditation on its mysteries) - "always."

Excerpt from *Augustissimae Virginis Mariae*
ENCYCLICAL LETTER OF POPE LEO XIII SEPTEMBER 12, 1897

THE ROSARY CONFRATERNITY: ITS EXCELLENCE

We do not hesitate to assign a pre-eminent place among these societies to that known as the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary. If we regard its origin, we find it distinguished by its antiquity, for St. Dominic himself is said to have been its founder. If we estimate its privileges, we see it enriched with a vast number of them granted by the munificence of our predecessors. The form of the association, its very soul, is the Rosary of Our Lady, of the excellence of which we have elsewhere spoken at length. Still the virtue and efficacy of the Rosary appear all the greater when considered as the special office of the Confraternity which bears its name.

Everyone knows how necessary prayer is for all men; not that God's decrees can be changed, but, as St. Gregory says, "that men by asking may merit to receive what Almighty God has decreed from eternity to grant them." And St. Augustine says, "He who knows how to pray aright, knows how to live aright." But prayers enjoy their greatest efficacy in obtaining God's assistance when offered publicly, by large numbers, constantly, and unanimously, so as to form as it were a single chorus of supplication; as those words of the Acts of the Apostles clearly declare wherein the disciples of Christ, awaiting the coming of the Holy Ghost, are said to have been "persevering with one mind in prayer." Those who practice this manner of prayer will never fail to obtain certain fruit.

Such is certainly the case with members of the Rosary Confraternity. Just as by the recitation of the Divine Office, priests offer a public, constant, and most efficacious supplication; so the supplication offered by the members of this sodality in the recitation of the Rosary, or "Psalter of Our Lady" as it has been styled by some of the Popes, is also in a way public, constant, and universal.

Since, as we have said, public prayers are much more excellent and more efficacious than private ones, so ecclesiastical writers have given to the Rosary Confraternity the title of "the army of prayers, enrolled by St. Dominic under the banner of the Mother of God" - of her whom sacred literature and the history of the Church salute as the conqueror of the Evil One and of all errors. The Rosary unites together all who join the Confraternity in a common bond of paternal or military comradeship, so that a mighty host is thereby formed, duly marshaled and arrayed, to repel the assaults of the enemy, both from within and without. Wherefore may the members of this pious society take to themselves the words of St. Cyprian: "Our prayer is public and in common; and when we pray, we pray not for one, but for the whole people, for we, the entire people, are one."

NINETEENTH ROSE FROM THE SECRET OF THE ROSARY BY ST. LOUIS MARIE DE MONTEFORT

Happy Exchange

It is written: "Give and it shall be given unto you." To take Blessed Alan's illustration of this: "Supposing each day I give you one hundred and fifty diamonds, even if you were my enemy, would you not forgive me? Would you not treat me as a friend and give me all the graces that you were able to give? If you want to gain the riches of grace and of glory, salute the Blessed Virgin, honor your good Mother." "He that honoreth his mother (the Blessed Virgin) is as one that layeth up a treasure." So every day do give her at least fifty Hail Marys - for each one is worth fifteen precious stones and they please Our Lady far more than all the riches of this world put together.

And you can expect such great things from her generosity! She is our Mother and our friend. She is the empress of the universe and loves us more than all the mothers and queens of the world have ever loved any one human being. This is really so, for the charity of the Blessed Virgin far surpasses the natural love of all mankind and even of all the angels, as St. Augustine says.

One day St. Gertrude had a vision of Our Lord counting gold coins. She summoned the courage to ask Him what He was doing. He answered: "I am counting the Hail Marys that you have said; this is the money with which you can pay your way to Heaven."

The holy and learned Jesuit, Father Suarez, was so deeply aware of the value of the Angelic Salutation that he said that he would gladly give all his learning for the price of one Hail Mary that had been said properly.

Blessed Alan de la Roche said: "Let everyone who loves you, oh Most Holy Mary, listen to this and drink it in:

Whenever I say Hail Mary, the court of heaven rejoices and the earth is lost in wonderment.
And I despise the world and my heart is brim-full of the love of God, *when I say Hail Mary*;
All my fears wilt and die and my passions are quelled *if I say Hail Mary*;
Devotion grows within me and sorrow for sin awakens *when I say Hail Mary*.
Hope is made strong in my breast and the dew of consolation falls on my soul more and more -
because I say Hail Mary.

And my spirit rejoices and sorrow fades away - *when I say Hail Mary*.

For the sweetness of this blessed salutation is so great that there are no words to explain it adequately, and even when its wonders have been sung, we still find it so full of mystery and so profound that its depths can never be plumbed. It has but few words but is exceedingly rich in mystery; it is sweeter than honey and more precious than gold. We should often meditate upon it in our hearts and have it ever upon our lips so as to say it devoutly again and again.

Blessed Alan says that a nun who had always had great devotion to the Holy Rosary appeared after death to one of her sisters in religion and said to her: "If I were allowed to go back into my body, to have the chance of saying just one single Hail Mary - even if I said it quickly and without great fervor - I would gladly go through the sufferings that I had during my last illness all over again, in order to gain the merit of this prayer." This is all the more compelling because she had been bedridden and had suffered agonizing pains for several years before she died.

Michel de Lisle, Bishop of Salubre, who was a disciple and co-worker of Blessed Alan's in the re-establishment of the Holy Rosary said that the Angelic Salutation is the remedy for all ills that we suffer as long as we say it devoutly in honor of Our Lady.

SALUTATION TO MARY

"This salutation is so beautiful! Recite it daily. From her throne in Heaven the Blessed Virgin will bless you, and you must make the sign of the Cross. Yes! Yes! If only you could see - Our Lady blesses you. I know it!"

"Offered for the conversion of a sinner it would be impossible not to be granted."

(Pere Paul de Moll, O.S.B.)

Hail Mary! Daughter of God the Father.

Hail Mary! Mother of God the Son.

Hail Mary! Spouse of God the Holy Ghost.

Hail Mary! Temple of the Most Blessed Trinity.

Hail Mary! Pure Lily of the Effulgent Trinity, God.

Hail Mary! Celestial Rose of the ineffable Love of God.

Hail Mary! Virgin pure and humble, of whom the King of Heaven willed to be born and with thy milk to be nourished.

Hail Mary! Virgin of Virgins.

Hail Mary! Queen of Martyrs, whose soul a sword transfixes.

Hail Mary! Lady most blessed! Unto whom all power in Heaven and earth is given.

Hail Mary! My Queen and my Mother! My Life, my sweetness and my Hope.

Hail Mary! Mother most Amiable.

Hail Mary! Mother most Admirable.

Hail Mary! Mother of Divine Love.

Hail Mary! IMMACULATE! Conceived without sin!

Hail Mary! Full of Grace! The Lord is with Thee!

Blessed art thou among women and

Blessed the Fruit of thy womb, JESUS!

Blessed be thy Spouse, St. Joseph

Blessed be thy Father, St. Joachim.

Blessed be thy Mother, St. Anne.

Blessed be thy Guardian, St. John.

Blessed be thy Holy Angel, St. Gabriel.

Glory be to God the Father, Who chose thee.

Glory be to God the Son, Who loved thee.

Glory be to God the Holy Ghost, Who espoused thee.

O Glorious Virgin Mary, may all men love and praise thee. Holy Mary, Mother of God! Pray for us, now, and at death in the Name of JESUS, thy Divine Son!