

## Hail Mary, full of Grace

(Rosary: Part One)

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you;  
blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

When was the last time you thought about the phrase, “*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you*”? What does the Hail Mary really mean and where did the prayer come from. As Catholics, it is important to understand the scriptural basis and Church’s teaching of our traditional prayers.

It’s in St. Luke’s gospel that we hear the angel Gabriel say to Mary: “*Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!*” {Luke 1:28} At that time the Holy Spirit was sometimes called the Spirit of Grace. {Hebrews 10:29} To also call Mary full of grace, is to recognize her as being full of the Holy Spirit.

The rest of the Rosary’s opening prayer comes from when “*Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, exclaims with a loud cry, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!’*” {Luke 1:41-42}

The phrase, “*Holy Mary, mother of God*”, does not come from the Bible directly but is a dogma of the Church. A dogma is a truth contained in the Word of God, in Scripture or tradition, that the Church uses as an essential teaching.

Let’s break it into two parts. First, it is easy to call Mary holy as all believers are called to be holy. In both the Old and New Testaments, we are told that as God’s children, God is calling us to “...*be holy, for I {the Lord} am holy.*” {Leviticus 11:45 and 1 Pet 1:16} Second, St. Peter applies it to all believers, of whom Mary was *the example* to the early Church. She was not only holy, but blessed by God, as the mother of Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah.

The next part of the Rosary, “Mother of God”, is a contentious one with our non-Catholic brothers and sisters. Frequently they think it implies Mary created God, which she did not. To see how this title came about we need to look to the Council of Ephesus in 451 A.D. The council had to deal with a heretical effort within the Church about whether Jesus was both human and divine. The heretics claimed that Mary only gave birth to Jesus’ humanity and not his divinity, thereby denying the unity of Christ’s two natures. The council’s decision was that Jesus was both divine and human, thus calling “Mary, the Mother of God”, states a truth in order to protect the essential reality about Christ.” {The Bible and the Virgin Mary, Journey through Scripture}



It is important to remember we do not offer Mary the worship that is owed to God, but rather the Church strives to be Mary-like in offering God the worship we owe to Him. {Catholic for a Reason II: Scripture and the Mystery of the Mother of God, 2nd Edition} Mary spent 30 years of her life with Jesus, pondering the messages from the angel Gabriel and the insights Jesus shared with her before he started his active ministry. Therefore, “To recite the Rosary is nothing other than to contemplate the face of Christ with Mary.” {Pope St. John Paul II}



As Catholics, we worship and adore only God. We honor and venerate Mary with great love and devotion because she so clearly demonstrates how we should worship God. Just as she prayed for Jesus and his ministry while on earth, she continues praying and interceding for us in heaven. {The Communion of saints} This is why the Rosary includes “pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.” Above all, we honor Mary because she is our mother in faith, given to us by Christ as he hung upon the cross. {John 19:26-27}

**Reflective Questions:**

1. At what age did you first learn the Hail Mary and from whom? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. Have you ever had to explain the term “Mother of God” to someone? \_\_\_\_\_  
If so, how did you explain it? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. Based on the Council of Ephesus, how might you explain the term today? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. Do you usually pray the “Hail Mary” only or the Rosary? \_\_\_\_\_
5. When praying the Rosary, do you use the shorter version or the longer, scriptural, version? Why?  
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Next Men’s Fellowship topic: The Rosary  
(Part Two: Praying the Scriptural Rosary)



Suggestion(s) for future Men’s Fellowship topics. Write them here then contact David Block at [p620d124@gmail.com](mailto:p620d124@gmail.com) or text him at 619-322-7520 with your ideas.

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