



# **THE PRAYER OF THE VIRGIN MARY**

## **Texts from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church***

### **The Prayer of the Virgin Mary**

*“Be it done to me according to your word.”*

Mary's prayer is revealed to us at the dawning of the fullness of time. Before the Incarnation of the Son of God, and before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, her prayer cooperates in a unique way with the Father's plan of loving kindness: at the Annunciation, for Christ's conception; at Pentecost, for the formation of the Church, his Body. (Cf. Lk 1:38; Acts 1:14) In the faith of his humble handmaid, the Gift of God found the acceptance he had awaited from the beginning of time. She whom the Almighty made "full of grace" responds by offering her whole being: "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be [done] to me according to your word". "Fiat": this is Christian prayer: to be wholly God's, because he is wholly ours. (2617)

*The new Eve - "the Mother of all the living"*

The Gospel reveals to us how Mary prays and intercedes in faith. At Cana, the mother of Jesus asks her son for the needs of a wedding feast; this is the sign of another feast - that of the wedding of the Lamb where he gives his body and blood at the request of the Church, his Bride. It is at the hour of the New Covenant, at the foot of the cross, that Mary is heard as the Woman, the new Eve, the true "Mother of all the living". (2618)

*"My soul magnifies the Lord"*

That is why the Canticle of Mary, the *Magnificat* (Latin) or *Megalynei* (Byzantine) is the song both of the Mother of God and of the Church; the song of the Daughter of Zion and of the new People of God; the song of thanksgiving for the fullness of graces poured out in the economy of salvation and the song of the "poor" whose hope is met by the fulfilment of the promises made to our ancestors, "to Abraham and to his posterity for ever". (Cf. Lk 1:46-55) (2619)

### **Prayer in Communion with the Holy Mother of God**

*In prayer the Holy Spirit unites us to the person of the only Son, in his glorified humanity, through which and in which our filial prayer unites us in the Church with the Mother of Jesus. (Cf. Acts 1:14) (2673)*

*Mary shows the way to Christ*

Mary gave her consent in faith at the Annunciation and maintained it without hesitation at the foot of the Cross. Ever since, her motherhood has extended to the brothers and sisters of her Son "who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties". (Vatican II, the Church) Jesus, the only mediator, is the way of our prayer; Mary, his mother and ours, is wholly transparent to him: she "shows the way" (*hodigitria*), and is herself "the Sign" of the way, according to the traditional iconography of East and West. (2674)

*Praise and supplication*

Beginning with Mary's unique cooperation with the working of the Holy Spirit, the Churches developed their prayer to the holy Mother of God, centring it on the person of Christ manifested in his mysteries. In countless hymns and antiphons expressing this prayer, two movements usually alternate with one another: the first "magnifies" the Lord for the "great things" he did for his lowly servant and through her for all human beings (Cf. Lk 1:46-55); the second entrusts the supplications and praises of the children of God to the Mother of Jesus, because she now knows the humanity which, in her, the Son of God espoused. (2675)

### **The "Hail Mary"**

This twofold movement of prayer to Mary has found a privileged expression in the *Ave Maria*:

*Hail Mary [or Rejoice, Mary]:*

The greeting of the angel Gabriel opens this prayer. It is God himself who, through his angel as intermediary, greets Mary. Our prayer dares to take up this greeting to Mary with the regard God had for the lowliness of his humble servant and to exult in the joy he finds in her. (Cf. Lk 1:48; Zeph 3:17)

*Full of grace, the Lord is with thee:*

These two phrases of the angel's greeting shed light on one another. Mary is full of grace because the Lord is with her. The grace with which she is filled is the presence of him who is the source of all grace. "Rejoice... O Daughter of Jerusalem... the LORD your God is in your midst" (Zeph 3:14, 17). Mary, in whom the Lord himself has just made his dwelling, is the daughter of Zion in person, the ark of the covenant, the place where the glory of the Lord dwells. She is "the dwelling of God... with men" (Rev 21:3). Full 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.

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

After the angel's greeting, we make Elizabeth's greeting our own. "Filled with the Holy Spirit", Elizabeth is the first in the long succession of generations who have called Mary "blessed". "Blessed is she who believed...": Mary is "blessed among women" because she believed in the fulfilment of the Lord's word. (Lk 1:41, 48; Lk 1:45) Abraham, because of his faith, became a blessing for all the nations of the earth. Mary, because of her faith, became the mother of believers, through whom all nations of the earth receive him who is God's own blessing: Jesus, the "fruit of thy womb". (2676)

*Holy Mary, Mother of God:*

With Elizabeth we marvel, "And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Lk 1:43) Because she gives us Jesus, her son, Mary is Mother of God and our mother; we can entrust all our cares and petitions to her: she prays for us as she prayed for herself: "Let it be to me according to your word." (Lk 1:38) By entrusting ourselves to her prayer, we abandon ourselves to the will of God together with her: "Thy will be done". (2677)

*Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death:*

By asking Mary to pray for us, we acknowledge ourselves to be poor sinners and we address ourselves to the "Mother of Mercy", the All-Holy One. We give ourselves over to her now, in the Today of our lives. And our trust broadens further, already at the present moment, to surrender "the hour of our death" wholly to her care. May she be there as she was at her Son's death on the Cross. May she welcome us as our mother at the hour of our passing to lead us to her son, Jesus, in paradise.

*Prayer of the Rosary*

Medieval piety in the West developed the *Prayer of the Rosary* as a popular substitute for the Liturgy of the Hours. In the East, the litany called the *Akathistos* and the *Paraclesis* remained closer to the choral office in the Byzantine churches, while the Armenian, Coptic and Syriac traditions preferred popular hymns and songs to the Mother of God. But in the *Ave Maria*, the *theotokia*, the hymns of St. Ephrem or St. Gregory of Narek, the tradition of prayer is basically the same. (2678)

### **Mary, Model of the Church at Prayer**

*Adhering with her to the plan of the Father*

Mary is the perfect *Orans* [pray-er], a figure of the Church. When we pray to her, we are adhering with her to the plan of the Father, who sends his Son to save all men. Like the beloved disciple we welcome Jesus' mother into our homes, for she has become the mother of all the living. We can pray with and to her. The prayer of the Church is sustained by the prayer of Mary and united with it in hope. (2679)

### **IN BRIEF**

- **The prayers of the Virgin Mary, in her *Fiat* and *Magnificat*, are characterized by the generous offering of her whole being in faith. (2622)**
- **Because of Mary's singular cooperation with the action of the Holy Spirit, the Church loves to pray in communion with the Virgin Mary, to magnify with her the great things the Lord has done for her and to entrust supplications and praises to her. (2682)**

