

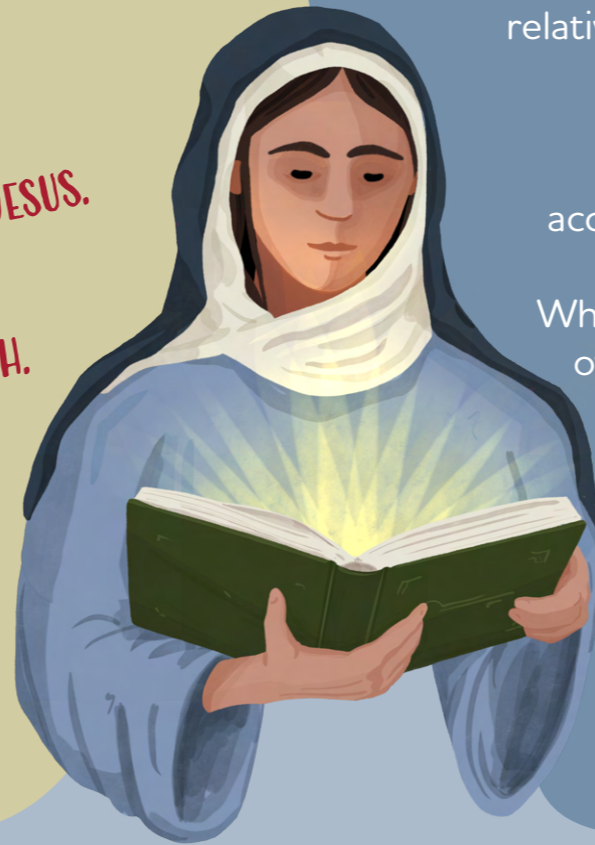
The Hail Mary Prayer

Our most well-known prayer to Our Lady, draws its key phrases from Luke's Gospel: the angel Gabriel's greeting to Mary in Luke 1:28 which forms the beginning of the prayer.

*HAIL MARY, FULL OF GRACE,
THE LORD IS WITH THEE,
AND 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*

Luke 1:26-38 – BIRTH OF JESUS FORETOLD

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favoured one, the Lord is with you!"



And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy - the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

When Gabriel tells Mary that the power of the Most High will overshadow her, this image comes from the Old Testament idea of a cloud symbolising the immediate presence and power of God. This cloud appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai and it remained in the Holy of Holies above the Ark of the Covenant in the most sacred part of the Jerusalem Temple. When Luke uses the same word for the Spirit's overshadowing of Mary, the angel Gabriel draws a prophetic parallel between God's presence in the Sanctuary and in Mary. She is the new, living Ark, the living tabernacle and sanctuary of God chosen to bear the Messiah.

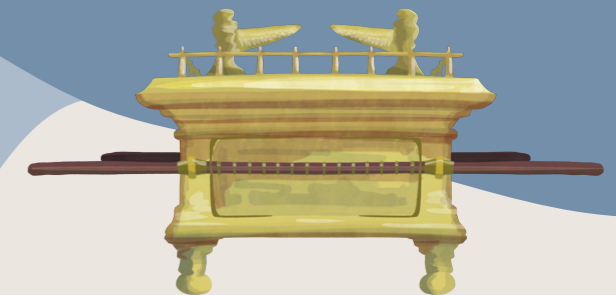
Gabriel gives Mary a rare greeting for an ordinary girl living in a town of no importance which is usually translated as "favoured" or "full of grace." but is more accurately translated from the Greek: "You who have been and are now filled with divine favour." Mary is uniquely greeted this way and the angel Gabriel only uses this term once.



The Hail Mary also celebrates Elizabeth's response to her cousin Mary, when Mary visits Elizabeth who is pregnant with John (later known as John the Baptist) in Luke 1:41-42.

Luke 1:39-45 – MARY VISITS ELIZABETH

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."



King David dances with great joy before the Ark of the Covenant in 2 Samuel 6:14 and here, the same words are used of John (the Baptist) leaping for joy in Elizabeth's womb upon hearing Mary's greeting in Luke 1:41. This symbolises John's joyful recognition of the Messiah and of Mary as the new Ark of the new Covenant.