

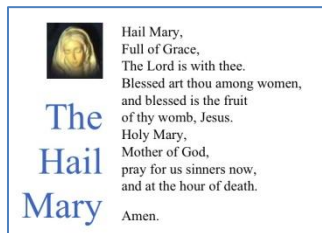
## Hail Mary Reflections

“**Hail Mary, full of grace . . .**” How many times have you repeated those words by rote without even thinking about them, probably hundreds, if not thousands? For me, it was probably the same number of times that I either didn’t think of or appreciate that these were the first words spoken by Angel Gabriel as he greeted our Blessed Mother at the Annunciation. That all changed when I started focusing on the words and praying the Rosary daily.

*How well do you know the Hail Mary?* Let’s start with “Do you know how many sentences are in it?” How about the number of words? Those are two of the easy questions, though the answer to the first one can vary. Sometimes it is broken into three sentences like it is shown below, starting with “Hail Mary”, “Blessed art thou” and Holy Mary”, while other times it is shown as one long sentence. The exact number of words that are in the Hail Mary total forty-two, counting “Amen”.

*Why do we Catholics pray the Hail Mary?* I’m not a theologian, but it would appear that it is to praise Mary, which is implied by the prayer’s name itself. If so, do you know how many times we reference Mary in this prayer? There are three direct references, two of which are by name with, “Hail Mary”, Holy Mary” and “Mother of God”. But there are also three indirect references for a total of six, if you include “the Lord is with **thee**”, “Blessed art **thou**” and “the fruit of **thy** womb, Jesus”.

*So, why do we pray the Hail Mary?* You may have your own particular reasons and personal intentions that are related to requests for intercession, but in the prayer itself there are just root of our request; that is when we course, we are asking that she do that the root of the request is asking “Holy sinners”. Perhaps the rest of the time, and win her favor?



her apparitions and innumerable titles, four words that seem to summarize the ask Mary to “pray for us sinners”. Of “now and at the hour of our death”, but Mary, Mother of God,” to “pray for us we are just trying to get her attention

This was where my revelations stopped for a while. I thought about them and prayed daily with them in mind for a couple of years and the prayer was enriched! Then, one Sunday morning, while I was praying the Rosary, something hit like a bolt of lightning and changed the entire way that I pray and view the Hail Mary. It was the realization that, while the Hail Mary appears to glorify her, this prayer has even more references to her Son, than it does to the Mary!

As mentioned, there are three direct references to Mary and three indirect for a total of six references. You may have already noticed that there are two times that Jesus is directly referenced if you count, “the **Lord** is with thee”. But there are also seven other indirect references alone to Jesus! After all, we wouldn’t be addressing her as “**Hail Mary**” if Mary wasn’t connected to Jesus in the first place. Nor would we be saying that she is “full of **grace**”. When we recite “**Blessed** art thou among women”, we are indirectly referring to Jesus and two more times when we say “and **blessed** is the **fruit** of thy womb”. Even in the last sentence or verse of the prayer, when we say “**Holy Mary, Mother of God**” you can’t help but realize that the “Hail Mary” is really about Jesus, for if it wasn’t for Mary’s connection to Jesus, none of these would apply.

Within moments, I had another revelation: to immediately share this revelation with a Christian friend of mine who was critical of Catholics praying the “Hail Mary”. It was as if I was being given a request from above to spread the word and now, perhaps, it is your turn? Praying the “Hail Mary” and the Rosary is really about praying and being led to Jesus, as Saint Pope John Paul II continually taught us. So, the next time you pray the “Hail Mary”, think of each one of the words and phrases, their sequence and origin. Think, too, of the references to Jesus, and you may never pray the “Hail Mary” the same way again.

*Reflections by Mickey Straub*