

PRAYERS TO MARY

**The Most Beautiful Marian Prayers
Taken from the Liturgies of the Church
and Christians throughout the Centuries**

Compiled and Edited

by

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Illustrated



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PREFACE

ONE way of linking together all the days of May (or any period that we wish to devote to Mary) is to take up and make our own some of the prayers that Christians throughout the ages have used to invoke our Lady and to express their love for her.

In this way, the continuous commemoration of Mary over the course of a designated period has a new reason every day for exalting our Lady's beauty and her sublime privileges. The daily encounter with Mary becomes an occasion to reinforce the motivating idea upon which the soul lives that day and to experience the presence of Mary more intimately and deeply, more cheerfully and carefully. Thus, the time spent with Mary is translated into a source of consolation for us.

“Your thoughts, O Mary, are full of tenderness, and your custom is to love human beings.” Such is the foundation for our trust, according to the Ethiopic Liturgy.

The prayers found herein are taken from relatively few sources—some less known Liturgies and the minds and hearts of saints and sinners, poets and simple folk. (An Appendix also gives some of the more well-known traditional prayers to Mary.)

However, they are prayers that reflect all situations. And this is enough to root in us the

conviction that “the prayers to the Blessed Virgin are prayers of reserve for times when we do not succeed in praying any other way. There is not even one such prayer that the most wretched sinner cannot say in all truth. Indeed, in the plan of salvation, prayer to Mary is the ultimate recourse: with it we can never be lost” (Charles Péguy).

The prayers are so different in tone that it should be easy for us to find one that corresponds to our own tone or mood and adapt ourselves to the sentiments it sets forth.

The assistance of a prayer that preserves and develops the sense of the mystery of Mary can elicit in us the basic attitudes of admiration, trust, and love toward our Lady.

Of course, the mystery of Mary cannot always be expressed in a loud voice. Sometimes, we must assume another attitude: “It is difficult to exalt you, O Virgin, with hymns that express our love, as we would like to do. It is easy for us to love you in silence, without any fear” (Byzantine Liturgy).

Just as it is true that before God “silence is praise of Him,” so is it at times even in the case of Mary and her mystery. We must find it spontaneous and easy to love our Lady in contemplative silence.

Virgilio Noè

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YOU SURPASS ALL PRAISE

This prayer, found in Egypt, was chiseled by an anonymous hand on a terra-cotta. It derives from the 3rd or 4th century. The text is inspired by the angel's salutation to Mary.

O immaculate Virgin,
Mother of God,
full of grace,
the One Whom you brought forth, Emmanuel,
is the fruit of your womb.

In your Motherhood
you have nurtured all human beings.
You surpass all praise and all glory.

I salute you,
Mother of God,
joy of the Angels,
because you surpass in fullness
what the Prophets have said about you.

The Lord is with you:
you gave life to the Savior of the world.

3rd-4th CENTURY

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WE GLORIFY YOU

The faithful, whether at home or in church, feel the Blessed Virgin's gaze on them. Mary looks out on them from domestic icons or from the central apses of the sanctuary.

The most frequent greeting addressed by the faithful to Mary in the liturgical Office or in prayers recited at home is the one given below. By its frequency it occupies the same place in the East that the Hail Mary has in the Marian devotion of the West.

YOU are more venerable than the Cherubim
and incomparably more glorious than the
Seraphim.

Without losing your virginity,
you gave birth to the Word of God
and are truly the Mother of God.
We glorify you.

BYZANTINE LITURGY