

Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary

WEDNESDAY

Evening Prayer

God, come to my assistance.
- Lord, make haste to help me

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

HYMN

What joy,
what happiness there is in heaven!

The shoot from the root of Jesse,
sown so long ago
in the time of the patriarchs,
has today sprung up and begun to grow.
It will bear a Flower
which is destined to heal the world,
a Flower whose scent revives the dead,
whose taste heals the sick,
and whose beauty delights the angels -
a white and red Flower
which angels long to see.

What joy,
when his Son comes at the end of time to greet us.

Thomas of Villanova (1487-1555)

Or:

Look upon Mary, my beloved,
how, when Gabriel entered in to her
and she spoke with him words of enquiry:

"How shall these things be?"
and the minister of the Spirit gave reply
to Mary and said: "It is easy for God,
all things are simple for him" -
how she held it true when she heard, and said:
"Behold, his handmaid am I."

Therefore he came down, in a manner he knows,
he stirred and came in a way that pleased him,
he entered and dwelt in her without her perceiving,
she received him, suffering nothing.
He was in her womb like a babe,
yet the whole world was full of him.
Of his love he came down to renew
the image of Adam grown old.

St. Ephrem (c. 306-373)

Or:

Ave Maria gratia plena,
Dominus tecum,
benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui Jesu.
Sancta Maria, Mater Dei,
ora pro nobis peccatoribus,
nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.

Melody: Ave Maria, Gregorian Mode I
Music: Traditional, Gregorian
Text: Traditional

PSALMODY

Ant 1: Mary entered the house of Zechariah, and greeted Elizabeth.

Or: Blessed are you, O Mary, for the world's salvation came forth through you. Now in glory, you rejoice forever with the Lord.

Psalm 139:1-18, 23-24

God sees all that is

Who has known the mind of God, who has been his counselor? (Romans 11:34).

I

O Lord, you search me and you know me,
you know my resting and my rising,
you discern my purpose from afar.
You mark when I walk or lie down,
all my ways lie open to you.

Before ever a word is on my tongue
you know it, O Lord, through and through.
Behind and before you besiege me,
your hand ever laid upon me.
Too wonderful for me this knowledge,
too high, beyond my reach.

O where can I go from your spirit,
or where can I flee from your face?
If I climb the heavens, you are there.
If I lie in the grave, you are there.

If I take the wings of the dawn
and dwell at the sea's furthest end,
even there your hand would lead me,
your right hand would hold me fast.

If I say: Let the darkness hide me
and the light around me be night,"
even darkness is not dark for you
and the night is as clear as the day.

Glory be to the Father, ...

Ant 1: Mary entered the house of Zechariah, and greeted Elizabeth.

Or: Blessed are you, O Mary, for the world's salvation came forth through you. Now in glory, you rejoice forever with the Lord.

Ant. 2 When your greeting sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.

Or: The Lord God Most High has blessed you, Virgin Mary, above all the women of the earth.

II

For it was you who created my being,
knit me together in my mother's womb.
I thank you for the wonder of my being,
for the wonders of all your creation.

Already you knew my soul
my body held no secret from you
when I was being fashioned in secret
and molded in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw all my actions,
they were all of them written in your book;
every one of my days was decreed
before one of them came into being.

To me, how mysterious your thoughts,
the sum of them not to be numbered!
If I count them, they are more than the sand;
to finish, I must be eternal, like you.

O search me, God, and know my heart.
O test me and know my thoughts.
See that I follow not the wrong path
and lead me in the path of life eternal.

Glory be to the Father, ...

Ant. 2 When your greeting sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy.

Or: The Lord God Most High has blessed you, Virgin Mary, above all the women of the earth.

Ant 3: Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

Or: Sinless Virgin, let us follow joyfully in your footsteps; draw us after you in the fragrance of your holiness.

Canticle

Colossians 1:12-20

**Christ the first-born of all creation
and the first-born from the dead**

Let us give thanks to the Father
for having made you worthy
to share the lot of the saints
in light.

He rescued us
from the power of darkness
and brought us
into the kingdom of his beloved Son.
Through him we have redemption,
the forgiveness of our sins.

He is the image of the invisible God,
the first-born of all creatures.
In him everything in heaven and on earth was created,
things visible and invisible.

All were created through him;
all were created for him.
He is before all else that is.
In him everything continues in being.

It is he who is head of the body, the church;
he who is the beginning,
the first-born of the dead,
so that primacy may be his in everything.

It pleased God to make absolute fullness reside in him
and, by means of him, to reconcile everything in his person,

both on earth and in the heavens,
making peace through the blood of his cross.

Glory be the Father, ...

Ant 3: Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

Or: Sinless Virgin, let us follow joyfully in your footsteps; draw us after you in the fragrance of your holiness.

FIRST READING

1 Peter 5:5b-7

Clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for:

"God opposes the proud
but bestows favor on the humble."

So humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your worries upon him because he cares for you.

OR

Colossians 3:12-17

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

SECOND READING

From a homily by St. Bede the Venerable, priest

(Lib 1, 4: CCL 122, 23-26,30)

Mary proclaims the greatness of the Lord working in her

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior. With these words Mary first acknowledges the special gifts she has been given. Then she recalls God's universal favors, bestowed unceasingly on the human race.

When a man devotes all his thoughts to the praise and service of the Lord, he proclaims God's greatness. His observance of God's commands, moreover, shows that he has God's power and greatness always at heart. His spirit rejoices in God his savior and delights in the mere recollection of his creator who gives him hope for eternal salvation.

These words are often for all God's creations, but especially for the Mother of God. She alone was chosen, and she burned with spiritual love for the son she so joyously conceived. Above all other saints, she alone could truly rejoice in Jesus, her savior, for she knew that he who was the source of eternal salvation would be born in time in her body, in one person both her own son and her Lord.

For the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. Mary attributes nothing to her own merits. She refers all her greatness to the gift of the one whose essence is power and whose nature is greatness, for he fills with greatness and strength the small and the weak who believe in him.

She did well to add: *and holy is his name*, to warn those who heard, and indeed all who would receive his words, that they must believe and call upon his name. For they too could share in everlasting holiness and true salvation according to the words of the prophet: *and it will come to pass, that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.* This is the name she spoke of earlier: *and my spirit rejoices in God my savior.*

Therefore it is an excellent and fruitful custom of holy Church that we should sing Mary's hymn at the time of Evening Prayer. By meditating upon the incarnation, our devotion is kindled, and by remembering the example of God's Mother, we are encouraged to lead a life of virtue. Such virtues are best achieved in the evening. We are weary after the day's work and worn out by our distractions. The time for rest is near, and our minds are ready for contemplation.

RESPONSORY

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.

- Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.

Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

- The Lord is with you.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

- Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.

Or:

Happy are you who have believed,
because the Lord's promises will be accomplished in you.

And Mary said:

- My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.

Come, and listen,
and I will tell what great things God
has accomplished for me.

- My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.

CANTICLE OF MARY

Luke 1:46-55

Ant: All generations will call me blessed; the Lord has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

My soul rejoices in the Lord.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior;
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel,
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
The promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children for ever.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Ant: All generations will call me blessed; the Lord has looked with favor on
his lowly servant.

INTERCESSIONS

Let us praise God our Almighty Father, who wished that Mary, his Son's
mother, be celebrated by each generation. Now in need we ask:

- Mary, full of grace, intercede for us.

O God, worker of miracles, you made the Immaculate Virgin Mary share
body and soul in your Son's glory in heaven,

- direct the hearts of your children to that same glory.

Lord, make your Church one in mind and heart, united in your love,

- and keep Christians united in prayer with Mary, the mother of Jesus.

You made Mary the mother of mercy,

- may all who are faced with trials feel her motherly love.

You wished Mary to be the mother of the family in the home of Jesus and
Joseph,

- may all mothers of families foster love and holiness through her
intercession.

You crowned Mary queen of heaven,
- may all the dead rejoice in your kingdom with the saints for ever.

Our Father...

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Eternal Father,
you inspired the Virgin Mary, mother of your Son,
to visit Elizabeth and assist her in her need.
Keep us open to the working of your Spirit,
and with Mary may we praise you for ever.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

May the Lord bless us,
protect us from evil
and bring us to everlasting life.
- Amen.