

THE THREE HAIL MARYS

All of the Saints of the Church agree in assuring us that there is no path to Heaven as certain, as safe, as simple, as easy, or as secure, as a true and loving devotion to Mary, the Mother of God. The great Saint and Doctor of the Church, Saint Alphonsus Liguori (among so many others), reminds us of this Heavenly Truth: “A devout servant of Mary shall never lose their soul!”

Of all of the Marian devotions approved by the Church which promise Our Blessed Mother’s assistance at the hour of our death - and thereby help us to save our soul - what could be simpler or easier than to pray three Hail Marys each day in honor of the privileges given to Mary by the Adorable Trinity?

There are countless true stories which prove that this devotion is most pleasing to the Blessed Trinity and the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, and that it will bring down powerful graces and helps on those who faithfully pray these Three Hail Marys as the Mother of God has requested.

This practice was revealed to Saint Mechtilde (a nun who lived in the 13th century) while she was begging Our Blessed Mother to assist her at the hour of her death. Our Lady appeared to her and said:

“I will do this, but I want you to pray three Hail Marys every day in honor of the fact that God has elevated me above all the rest of Creation, filling me with every gift and grace in its Divine Fullness, especially:

“Offer the first Hail Mary in honor of the Power that God the Father has given to me, and I will use that Power at the hour of your death to protect you from all the enemies of your soul and of your salvation;

“Offer the second Hail Mary in honor of the Wisdom that God the Son has given to me, and I will use that Wisdom at the hour of your death to penetrate your soul with the Light of Faith and knowledge, so that your faith cannot be tempted through ignorance or error.

“Offer the third Hail Mary in honor of the Love that God the Holy Spirit has poured into me. It is the sweetness of His Own Love in its fullness. And I will use that Love at the hour of your death to pour into your soul the sweetness of the Love of God, so that His Love may be so strong in you, that, because of it, all the pain and bitterness of death may be to you exceedingly sweet.

“God has made me, after Himself, the most powerful, the wisest and the most gentle and loving being in all of Creation.”

We learn more of this devotion from Saint Gertrude the Great, who lived with Saint Mechtilde in the same Benedictine convent in Helfta in Thuringia (modern day Germany) and died in 1302 AD. She was one of the most amazing mystics in the history of the Church. She received almost uninterrupted visions and revelations from Heaven for many years. In her book of Revelations we find the following story:

“While Saint Gertrude chanted the Hail Mary, during Matins on the great Feast of the Annunciation, she suddenly saw three streams which flowed with gentle but powerful fervor from the Heart of the God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. These three bright flames penetrated the Heart of the Holy Mother of God. Then Saint Gertrude heard the following words: ‘After the Power of the Father, the Wisdom of the Son and the merciful Tenderness of the Holy Spirit, nothing approaches the Power, the Wisdom and the merciful Tenderness of Mary.’”

Our Blessed Mother also revealed to Saint Gertrude the Great: “To any soul who faithfully prays the Three Hail Marys, I will appear to them at the hour of their death in a splendor so extraordinary that it will fill the soul with heavenly consolation.”

To benefit by these powerful prayers you must say all three Hail Marys every day for these three intentions: to honor the unequalled Power, Wisdom and most tender Love of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary.

If on any day you should forget to say these prayers, do not be discouraged. With confident humility, tell your Heavenly Mother Mary of your weakness and ask for help to be more faithful. Then begin again with a stronger resolution to do all that She asks of you in this devotion. You should pray to Mary every day, but remember also to pray with Mary always!

The following story is a classic example among countless others that show the incredible powerful mercy that Mary bestows through this devotion. This story is related by a Franciscan friar, Richard of St. Anne, who was later martyred for the Faith. He himself was living in Brussels in 1604 when the following incident took place.

Two students living in the town had the habit of pursuing their pleasures instead of their studies. Together they wasted many precious hours of their lives with the empty excesses all too common to that occupation. One typical evening, these two were indulging in their sins of drunkenness and impurity when one of them decided to head home.

It was late and he was tired, but before he went to bed, he tried to recite three Hail Marys in honor of the Blessed Virgin as was his night time habit. Struggling, he finally succeeded and then fell into his bed. A short time later, his deep, exhausted sleep was shattered by a sudden loud knocking at his door. Before he fully awoke, he was suddenly confronted by his sinful companion, who now appeared horribly disfigured and monstrous. "Who are you?" the frightened young man demanded.

"What? Don't you know me?" replied the poor wretch.

"But how can it be you? What happened? You look like a devil!"

"Ah, pity me! There is a hell, and I am damned," the pitiful soul howled. "I left that accursed house tonight shortly after you. Almost immediately, some cursed devil took me by surprise and strangled me. Though my body lies still warm in the street, my soul has already been condemned forever - imprisoned in the eternal flames of hell. Moreover, this same fate is what you deserve, but the Holy Virgin preserved you from it thanks to your habit of honoring Her each day with a few Hail Marys. It is She who obtained my appearance here. Happy are you if you know how to profit from what you have been shown." As he hissed his final statement, the damned companion opened his garment, revealing the flames and serpents that had already begun their endless, unceasing cycle of torments. Then he vanished.

The horror of what he had just witnessed, together with the profound relief at so narrowly avoiding so awful a fate, overwhelmed the young man who collapsed in tears on the floor. For the first time in his life, he truly prayed - prayed with a deep and sincere gratitude to Our Lady for Her protection. As he prayed he was inspired to join the nearby Franciscan community so that he could live a life of penance and make reparation. Early that morning, his initial attempt to enter was rejected because his immoral habits were so well known to them. At length, through tears, he recounted the events of the preceding night and begged to be received. Two religious were sent to verify the story and did in fact discover the blackened corpse of the miserable youth that had lost his soul. The community relented and permitted entrance to the penitent who began at once to sincerely pursue a life of penance; a life which edified the rest of the community.

But Our Lady's graces did not end there. The reality of these nightmarish facts filled many people in the surrounding areas with more than enough soul-gripping fright to change their own lives. It was, in fact, the very reason Richard entered into religious life and sought to pursue a life of mortification and virtue. When one realizes that the life these two companions were living is all too common for those living in the world and how terrifyingly awful and eternal are the consequences of such a life, it is easy to see why so many souls turned their backs on such lives and instead entrusted themselves entirely to the Mother of God, begging Her to form them in the image of Her Son, and thereby securing their eternal salvation. Does a stark re-examination of these gruesome facts still hold the power of conversion today? Our Lady is just as ready now as She was then, to assist all those who will turn to Her for help to change their lives and save their souls. Why not start today? Just three Hail Marys. The sacrifice of a few minutes a day may just lead to an unending eternity of happiness!

THE FOLLOWING PRAYER OF INTENTION CAN BE SAID BEFORE PRAYING YOUR DAILY THREE HAIL MARYS.

I offer these prayers to give honor to Almighty God for elevating the Blessed Virgin Mary above all the rest of Creation by filling Her with every gift and grace in its Divine fullness - especially: the Power of God the Father, the Wisdom of God the Son, and the Love of God the Holy Spirit. And I beg my Heavenly Mother Mary to form me into everything that God desires, and to bring me to Heaven when I die.

Hail Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with Thee; 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 (3 times)

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