

What is a Litany?

A Litany is a series of petitions for use in church services or processions, usually recited by the clergy and responded to in a recurring formula by the people.

The Litany to the Blessed Virgin Mary contains many of the titles used formally and informally for the Virgin Mary, and would often be recited as a call and response chant in a group setting.

This litany to the Blessed Virgin Mary was composed during the Middle Ages. The place of honour it now holds in the life of the Church is due to its faithful use at the shrine of the Holy House at Loreto. It was approved by Sixtus V in 1587. Its titles and invocations set before us Mary's exalted privileges, her holiness of life, her amiability and power, her motherly spirit and queenly majesty.   
The principle that has been followed in their interpretation is the one enunciated by the same Pius IX: "*God enriched her so wonderfully from the treasury of His divinity, far beyond all angels and saints with the abundance of all heavenly gifts, that she . . .should show forth such fullness of innocence and holiness, than which a greater under God is unthinkable and which, beside God, no one can even conceive in thought."*  
Hence, whatever virtue and holiness is found in angels and saints must be present in Mary in an immeasurably higher degree.

