

The Angelus- Information for Teachers

This wonderful prayer evolved from a recitation of three Hail Mary’s following an evening bell around the 12th century to its present form (with morning and midday recitations) in the 16th century.

When prayed in a group setting a leader recites the verses and everyone recites both the responses and the Hail Mary’s in between each verse, as shown above.

Although the Angelus has been traditionally said three times daily, at 6 am, noon and 6 pm, you can pray it at any time. It is often accompanied by the ringing of a bell (the Angelus bell) in some places.



The Angelus reminds us of the Annunciation (shown in this famous rendition at left by Fra Angelico), when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary with great news of Jesus’ impending birth. As we read in Chapter One of Luke’s Gospel, (Luke 1:26-38) God wished Mary, truly a model of humility, to be the mother of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

His desire for her brings to mind the line from Matthew’s gospel: “Whoever humbles himself shall be exalted” (Matt 23:12).

Mary was the perfect choice. She had been born without the stain of original sin, as defined by the Church’s dogma of the Immaculate Conception. (Note that the Immaculate Conception relates to *Mary’s* conception, not our Lord’s.)

When Mary calls herself the handmaid, the servant, of the Lord, in the Angelus (from Luke 1:38) it is with inspiring humility and *sincerity*.

Mary’s humility was genuine. As St. Alphonsus de Liquori notes in his classic work *The Glories of Mary,* “her only desire was that her Creator, the giver of every good thing, should be praised and blessed.”

She thought of herself first and foremost as God’s servant, seeking glory not for herself but rather for Him. In so doing, she became, as St. Augustine put it rather poetically, a “heavenly ladder, by which God came into the world,” descending from heaven to earth, to become flesh in her womb.

Mary was happy to have God work *through her*. As she expressed it most famously in the canticle the *Magnificat*, "My soul magnifies the Lord and my Spirit rejoices in God my Saviour" (Luke 1:46-47). St. Paul echoed this wonderful sentiment when he wrote that “he who boasts, let him boast in the Lord” (2 Cor 10:17).

The Angelus pays tribute to a crucial aspect of Mary’s role in the Incarnation, when it quotes from Luke’s Gospel “be it done to me according to thy word” (Lk 1:38). This wonderful event could not have happened without her consent, without what is known as her *fiat*. By saying “yes” to God in allowing herself to become His mother, she showed us the ultimate example of trust in our Creator.

Speaking of God’s word, the Angelus completes its short summary of the Incarnation with the moving reference to our Lord from John’s Gospel: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). As we read in the letter to the Hebrews, Christ was like us in all things but without sin (Heb 4:15). St. Bernard noted that our Lord came to show us His love so that He might then experience ours.

The lines that follow about being made worthy of the promises of Christ are also found in the Rosary and tie in well with what follows: an appeal for God’s grace to help us in our pilgrimage of faith.

Jesus loved us enough to die for us so that we might live with Him eternally. When we pray the Angelus with humility and love, we are emulating Mary’s faith in His goodness. We are blessed in that we can ask both God *and* His Blessed Mother for their assistance on our journey towards Eternal Life.