

Praying
the
Angelus



Call to prayer

God calls us to prayer because he loves us and wants our unity with Him to grow stronger. We respond to His call to prayer because we love God.

Praying the Angelus in the middle of the working day provides a timely opportunity for us to remember that love.

St Therese of Lisieux

‘For me, prayer is a surge of the heart, it is a simple look toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.’

Do I recognise God in my life through prayer?

The Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI

*and the
Angelus*

Dear brothers and sisters,

At the end of this solemn celebration of Holy Mass we now pray the Angelus together. This prayer constantly reminds us of the historical beginnings of our salvation. The Archangel Gabriel presents God's plan of salvation to the Virgin Mary, by which she was to become the Mother of the Redeemer. Mary was fearful, but the angel spoke a word of comfort to her: 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God'. So Mary is able to respond with her great 'yes'. This 'yes', by which she accepts to become the handmaid of the Lord, is the trusting 'yes' to God's plan, to our salvation. And she finally addresses her 'yes' to us all, whom she received as her children entrusted to her at the foot of the Cross (cf. Jn 19:27).

She never withdraws this promise. And so she is called happy, or rather blessed, for believing that what was promised her by the Lord would be fulfilled (cf. Lk 1:45).

As we pray the Angelus, we may join Mary in her ‘yes’, we may adhere trustingly to the beauty of God’s plan and to the providence that he has assigned to us in his grace. Then God’s love will also, as it were, take flesh in our lives, becoming ever more tangible. In all our cares we need have no fear. God is good. At the same time we know that we are sustained by the fellowship of the many believers who are now praying the Angelus with us throughout the world, via radio and television.

Freiburg, Germany, 25.9.11

Prayer

What is Prayer?

‘Prayer is the elevation of the mind and heart to God in praise of His glory; a petition made to God for some desired good, or in thanksgiving for a good received, or in intercession for others before God. Through prayer the Christian experiences a communion with God through Christ in the Church.’

Catechism of the Catholic Church #2559-2565

Pope Benedict XVI

‘Prayer is not only the breath of the soul but, to make use of a metaphor, it is also the oasis of peace from which we can draw the water that nourishes our spiritual life and transforms our existence.’

How do I ‘nourish’ my ‘spiritual life’?

Prayer with children

Children learn prayer by praying!

Prayer is taught through experiences of prayer, the modeling of prayer, and the learning of common prayers.

Prayer plays an important part in the development of children. This is so even for the very young, ‘so that the little child may learn to call upon the God who loves us and protects us, and upon Jesus, the Son of God and our brother, who leads us to the Father, and upon the Holy Spirit, who dwells within our heart; so that this child may also direct confident prayers to Mary, the Mother of Jesus and our mother.’ *General Catechetical Directory*, 1972

‘The catechesis of children, young people, and adults aims at teaching them to meditate on the Word of God in personal prayer, practicing it in liturgical prayer, and internalizing it at all times in order to bear fruit in a new life. Catechesis is also a time for discernment and education of popular piety. The memorisation of basic prayers offers an essential support to the life of prayer, but it is important to help learners savor their meaning.’ CCC #2688

Prayer

Why is it important to model prayer?

What do I need in order to improve as a leader of prayer?

St Mary of the Cross MacKillop

Let us all resign ourselves into His hands, and pray that in all things He may guide us to do His Holy will... When thoughts of this or that come I turn to Him and say: 'Only what you will, my God. Use me as You will'.

What does it take for me to surrender to the will of God?

The Angelus

What is the Angelus?

The Angelus is a simple but earnest practice of devotion that causes us to recall the gift of God's Son. The name Angelus is derived from its opening words, 'The Angel of the Lord Declared unto Mary'. It consists of three verses, each followed by the recitation of the Hail Mary, an invocation to our Blessed Mother and a concluding prayer. Whilst it may be said privately, when said communally, usually one person leads by saying the first part of the verse. The community responds by saying the second part of the verse. The leader then recites the first part of the Hail Mary aloud with the community then joining in to say the remaining part. The concluding prayer is recited together.

The ringing of bells is associated with the Angelus and dates back to the 16th century. The ringing of the bells is more than a call to prayer they represent the prayer itself. Three bells ring throughout each of the three verses with nine bells throughout the final prayer.

The rhythm of the Angelus reminds us that there is more to life than daily toil. The prayer is traditionally recited three times during the day, morning, noon and evening; times that mark the daily rhythm of life. The interruption is deliberate; in important respects, it is the very point of the prayer.

History of the Angelus

The historical origins of the Angelus are linked to the spread of the Hail Mary as private prayer. It is believed that St Anthony of Padua (1195 – 1231) encouraged the practice of reciting it three times a day. St Bonaventure (1269) accompanied this with a meditation on the mystery of the Incarnation. He used the peal of the bell to call his fellow friars and the faithful of the region to recite the prayer. It is said that at the convent of the Friars Minor of Arezzo, it was preceded by the statement, ‘Angelus locutus est Mariae’, ‘The angel spoke to Mary’. King Louis XI (1472) prescribed the practice for his entire kingdom asking that the prayers be offered for peace. It was in the 16th century that the form of the Angelus that we recite today was fixed. Pope Benedict XIV (1742) and Pope Leo XIII (1884) both name the angelus in their books of prayer.

To this day, every Sunday Pope Benedict XVI, beginning with a short talk on the Gospel of the day, publically recites the Angelus. This takes place at noon wherever in the world he is. It is a living prayer that offers Christians a means of contemplating a fresh the reality of the Incarnation.

Jean-François Millet

Jean-François Millet's *The Angelus* represents his desire to capture the undeniable simplicity of life and a momentary pause in the rhythm of the day.

In 1865, Millet said: 'The idea for *The Angelus* came to me because I remembered that my grandmother, hearing the church bell ringing while we were working in the fields, always made us stop work to say the Angelus prayer'.

The Angelus is presently on display at the Museum d'Orsay in Paris.



Jean-François Millet, *L'Angélus*,
c. 1857-1859, oil on canvas,
21 x 26 (53.3 x 66 cm)
(Musée d'Orsay, Paris)

Public Domain

God with us

The Incarnation

Incarnation: God's act of becoming man in Jesus Christ. This is the foundation of Christian faith and of hope for the redemption of mankind.

In Jesus Christ, God reconciled the world to himself and redeems mankind from the imprisonment of sin. 'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son' (Jn3:16). In Jesus, God took on our mortal human flesh (incarnation), shared our earthly lot, our suffering, and our death, and became like us in all things but sin. *YouCat* 76

'God is so great that he can become small. God is so powerful that he can make himself vulnerable and come to us as a defenseless child, so that we can love him.'

Pope Benedict XVI December 24, 2005

What does it mean for each of us that 'God became man'?

Upon what foundation is your relationship with Christ formed?

The Angelus and The Blessed Virgin Mary

It was through Mary's active consent that the Incarnation of God took place.

When the angel told her that she would bear 'the Son of God', Mary replied, 'let it be done to me according to your word' (Lk1:38). The redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ thus begins with a request by God and the free consent of a human being. By such an unusual path Mary became for us the 'Gate of Salvation.' *YouCat* 84

'When faith in the Mother of God declines, faith in the Son of God and God the Father declines also.'

Ludwig Feuerbach, 1804 -1872, atheistic philosopher, in *The Essence of Christianity*

Are you prepared, as Mary was, to respond to God's call in your life?

How do you draw strength from the fellowship offered in a Catholic community?

Do you take comfort in the fact that through God all things are possible?

Blessed Fra Angelico

Beatified in 1882, the Dominican Friar, Blessed Fra Angelico, dedicated his work exclusively to religious subjects, as he believed art to be a personal form of religious devotion and prayer.

He painted the Annunciation many times, his best known being the Cortona Altarpiece that he painted in 1426 for the Convent of Santo Domenico in Fiesole. On display at the Prado Museum, Madrid, it consists of *The Annunciation* as the main work and six small predella pictures below.



Fra Angelico, *The Annunciation and Life of the Virgin* (in the predella), c. 1426, tempera on wood, 194 x 194 cm (Museo del Prado, Madrid)

Public Domain

The Angelus

V The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.

R And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

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.

V Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

R Be it done unto me according to thy word. (Hail Mary...)

V And the Word was made Flesh.

R And dwelt among us. (Hail Mary...)

V Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God.

R That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

LET US PRAY

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts; that, we to whom the Incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an Angel, may by His Passion and Cross, be brought to the glory of His Resurrection.

Through the same Christ our Lord.

Amen.



Catholic Education
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