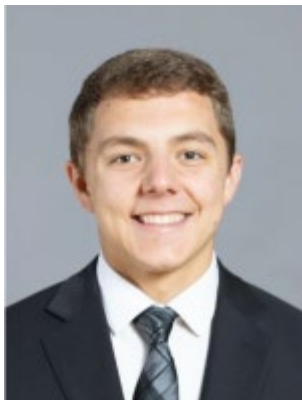




ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS
Office of Sacred Worship

LITURGY NOTES



OUR LADY OF SORROWS AND CAUSE OF OUR JOY

By: Ben Eusterbrock, Seminarian at Kenrick Glennon Seminary

I used to be confused by the seemingly endless list of titles for the Blessed Mother: “Immaculate Conception,” “Our Lady of Fatima,” “Queen of Apostles,” “Mother of Good Council”—why can’t I just call her “Mary”? The most mysterious name was “Our Lady of Sorrows,” for sorrow was certainly not the kind of thing I wanted to receive from Mary. When, however, I consecrated myself to Jesus through Mary on the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows after the 33-day preparation, I learned that Our Lady had much more to offer me than sadness. She offered me an invitation to imitate her by allowing the sorrows of my own life to stretch my heart to love more deeply. Perhaps, as I began to see, we give Mary such numerous titles to honor the richness of her life and the abundant ways she makes herself present in our lives.

In this past year, I have spent much time contemplating the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, which is one of the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary and yet contains one of Mary’s Seven Sorrows: the Prophecy of Simeon. There is nothing Mary could claim to be her own more than her very Son, and yet at the Presentation she freely and joyfully offers Him to God the Father. As I prepare for ordination to the holy priesthood, I sometimes find myself tempted to claim my vocation as my own possession and not as a gift from God which I can fully surrender back to Him. Mary not only teaches me how to make an offering of my life and my vocation to the Father, but makes that offering with me and accompanies me in the joys and sorrows which ensue.

As much as I love esteeming Mary by invoking her as Our Lady of Sorrows and Cause of Our Joy, the Holy Spirit has invited me to honor her in a new way by writing hymns to her about the Mysteries of the Rosary. When I pray my Rosary and sing the accompanying hymn, I am reminded of Mary’s unique place in my heart as my model for holiness and my Mother. The verse I wrote about the Presentation captures it as well as any other:

With open hands you place before
The Father His begotten Son
A sword will pierce your tender heart
But still you say “Let it be done”

Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows and Cause of Our Joy, pray for us!

About the Author: *Benjamin Eusterbrock is a senior in Cardinal Glennon College at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary. His home parish is Saint Theodore, and he graduated from Saint Dominic High School in 2022. Ben enjoys playing sports, singing, and visiting beautiful churches. He asks for your prayers as he continues his journey towards ordination in 2031!*

Behold the Handmaid of the Lord

The Joyful Mysteries

“Behold the handmaid of the Lord”
Oh Mary, you proclaim with grace!
As Jesus finds His home in you
So welcome me in your embrace

You hurry to Elizabeth
And share the Word most joyfully
Dear Mother, let me pray with you
“The Lord has done great things for me”

Beneath the stars you gaze upon
The One who knew you from the start
Assure me that your little child
Now makes His home within my heart

With open hands you place before
The Father His begotten Son
A sword will pierce your tender heart
But still you say “Let it be done”

You search for Jesus for three days
And ponder such things through and through
For when He triumphs over death
Obediently He comes to you

Melody: Eisenach LM

Benjamin Eusterbrock, 2026

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

By: Father Nicholas Smith, Director of the Office of Sacred Worship

There is a well-loved story about Venerable (soon to be Blessed) Fulton J. Sheen, the great American bishop and evangelist whose radio and television show *Life Is Worth Living* shared the Gospel with millions of Americans, both Catholics and non-Catholics.

Bishop Sheen had a deep devotion to the Blessed Mother, and often referred to Our Lady as his “Mother and Queen.” He believed she protected his priesthood and guided his work.

It was said that he once hoped he might die on a Marian feast day, seeing it as a final sign of belonging to her. He died on December 9, 1979, the day after the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (December 8). In one of his typical reflective moments, he imagined what his judgement might be like. He pictured himself standing before Christ the Judge, and he expressed a hope to hear the Lord say: “I have heard a lot about you from My Mother.”

This line captures something very Catholic. Sheen recognized that devotion to Mary is always



linked to devotion to Christ. To love the Mother means to be known by the Son. He believed that if he stayed close to Mary in life, she would speak for him in eternity.

Since he died on December 9, 1979, the day after the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, many of his followers saw this timing as a gentle smile from heaven. Whether told as a pious legend or remembered from his own talks, the story reflects the heart of Fulton Sheen: confidence in a Mother's intercession rather than in his own achievements. It leaves us with a simple spiritual lesson: If we stay close to Mary, we need not fear the judgment of her Son.

Marian devotion and spirituality have always held a cherished place within the Catholic faith. It is through love of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that Catholics are drawn ever more deeply into the mystery of Christ, and learn from her example of faith, humility, and complete trust in God.

Throughout the history of the Church, no human person has held a greater honor than the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her importance begins with the eternal plan of God. From the moment of the Annunciation, when she responded to the angel Gabriel, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38), Mary freely cooperated in the saving work of God. Her *fiat* ("yes") made possible the Incarnation; the Word becoming flesh in her womb.

Because Mary bore Jesus Christ, who is true God and true Man, the Church calls her *Theotokos*, Greek for "God-bearer" or "Mother of God." This is a title affirmed at the Council of Ephesus in 431. Because she gave birth to the Son of God, who is truly God and truly man, she became inseparably linked to the mystery of redemption.

Mary was present at important moments in the life of Christ: she carried him to Elizabeth and John the Baptist at the Visitation; she pondered His mission in her heart and was present at many moments during the period of His public ministry; she stood faithfully at the foot of the Cross; and she prayed with the Apostles in the Upper Room awaiting the outpouring the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

It was at Calvary, as He hung on the Cross, that Jesus entrusted His mother to John, the Beloved Disciple: "Behold, your mother" (John 19:27). It was at that moment that Mary became the spiritual mother of all believers, and she remains Mother of the Church, interceding for her children and always leading them to her Son.



May, the Month of Mary

The Church has a longstanding tradition of dedicating the month of May to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The month of May, associated with the freshness of spring and the return of new life, provides a most fitting metaphor of the purity and beauty of Mary. As new life flourishes, the Church honors the one through whom eternal life entered the world.

During May, many parishes often honor Mary in a variety of ways, including the following: May Crowning ceremonies, Marian hymns at Mass, parish rosaries, living rosaries, or rosary processions; floral offerings before an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary; special presentations on Marian doctrines, or Mary in the life of the Church. In the end, these devotions cultivate a greater love for Mary so we may, in the end, grow closer to Christ.

October, the Month of the Rosary

October is the month dedicated to the Most Holy Rosary. This tradition is based upon the Christian victory at the Battle of Lepanto on October

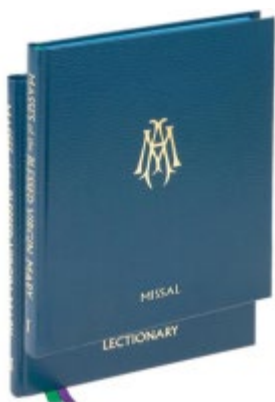
7, 1571. This victory was attributed to the intercession of Our Lady through the Rosary. For this reason, Pope Pius V established October 7th as Our Lady of the Rosary, which recalls the rosary and its meditation on the mysteries of Christ and our salvation.



The Rosary is oftentimes referred to as a “compendium of the Gospel,” because in its mysteries—Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful, and Glorious—we contemplate the life of Christ and Mary’s share in that life. When the Rosary is prayed, we enter into the saving events of Christ’s life through the heart of His Blessed Mother.

In addition, the Rosary is sometimes called the “Psalter of the Blessed Virgin Mary, or the “Poor Man’s Psalter” because historically it was used as a substitute for the 150 psalms in the Bible. Monks and those in religious communities chanted all 150 psalms daily (the Psalter). So, those who could not read or did not have access to a Psalter, began using beads to count the 150 Hail Marys as a replacement for the chanting of psalms, thereby allowing them to participate in a similar devotional practice.

Many parishes mark October with weekly communal Rosary gatherings; a living Rosary with the grade school/PSR; praying the Rosary before daily and/or Sunday Mass; reflections on the Mysteries of the Rosary; a Rosary procession on October 7, among others.



The Blessed Virgin Mary on Saturday

In the Church’s weekly liturgical rhythm, Saturdays during Ordinary Time have long been associated with the Blessed Virgin Mary. This custom comes from Holy Saturday, when tradition maintains that Mary alone kept perfect faith as Christ lay in the tomb. On the day before the Resurrection, it was Mary who waited in hope.

For the Saturdays in Ordinary Time dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the *Roman Missal* provides special Mass formularies that may be used.

The Church’s liturgical tradition of The Blessed Virgin Mary on Saturday puts Mary at the threshold of Sunday, the Day of the Lord and His Resurrection, as a reminder that she always leads us to Christ.

Marian Liturgies in the Church’s Prayer

The Church’s devotion to Mary is found in her various official liturgical books:

The *Roman Missal* contains numerous Marian feast days and votive Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The *Lectionary for Mass* provides proper readings for Marian solemnities, feasts, and memorials.

The *Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary* offers a beautiful variety of formularies for use during Ordinary Time.

The Liturgy of the Hours includes Marian antiphons and prayers throughout the year.

Mary’s presence in the Church’s liturgical prayer ensures that devotion to her is always Christ-

centered and grounded in Scripture.

Growing in Personal Devotion

Marian devotion is not merely communal; it is deeply personal. The Church encourages the faithful to cultivate a relationship with Mary through prayer and spiritual discipline.

For many Catholics, the Rosary the most accessible and widely practiced Marian devotion. Many also make a personal consecration to Jesus through Mary, entrusting themselves entirely to her maternal care:

- *33 Days to Morning Glory* offers a structured period of preparation culminating in an act of consecration.
- St. Louis de Montfort's classic method of Total Consecration invites the faithful to belong entirely to Christ through Mary's perfect discipleship.

Such consecration does not replace Christ; rather, it deepens our union with Him. Mary forms Christ within us as she did in her womb — by grace, obedience, and surrender.

Mary and the Life of Every Catholic

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is not optional sentimentality; it is a profound participation in the life of the Church. She is:

- The Mother of God
- The Mother of the Church
- The model disciple
- The intercessor who leads us to her Son

When we honor Mary, we do what the Gospel itself commands: "All generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:48).

May we turn to her often — in May, in October, on Saturdays, and throughout the entire year — asking her to teach us how to say "yes" to God with the same trust and fidelity with which she responded to the Angel Gabriel at Nazareth.

The prayer of every Catholic should be the same as that of Venerable Fulton J. Sheen. As we stand before Christ the Judge, may the Lord say to us, "I have heard a lot about you from my Mother."

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us!

marian devotions and apparitions resources

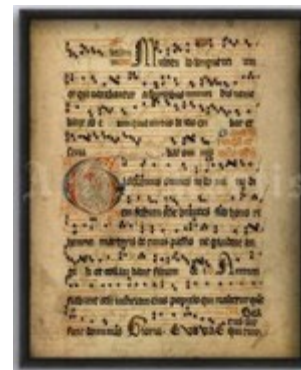
- [A Guide to Marian Apparitions from the Dynamic Catholic](#)
- [A Guide to Marian Devotions compiled by the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon](#)
- [Books about Our Blessed Mother from Ave Maria Press](#)

MUSIC



A Living Tradition in the Prayer and Music of the Church

For centuries the Church has ended her day with a song to the Blessed Virgin Mary. At the close of Compline (Night Prayer) in the *Liturgy of the Hours*, the faithful sing one of four seasonal Marian antiphons: *Alma Redemptoris Mater*, *Ave Regina Caelorum*, *Regina Caeli*, or *Salve Regina*.



These chants—simple yet profoundly expressive—form a cycle that accompanies the Church through the entire liturgical year. They are not merely historical relics or monastic customs. Rather, they remain part of the Church’s living liturgical tradition and continue to enrich the spiritual and musical life of parishes around the world.

For parish musicians and liturgy coordinators, the seasonal Marian antiphons present a remarkable opportunity: they unite sacred music, liturgical catechesis, Marian devotion, and the rhythm of the liturgical year in a way that is both accessible and deeply formative for the faithful.

The Marian Antiphons in the Prayer of the Church

The four Marian antiphons originate within the Divine Office, now called the Liturgy of the Hours. From the Middle Ages onward, monasteries and cathedral chapters developed the custom of singing a Marian text after the final office of the day.

The Church’s official instructions for the Liturgy of the Hours preserve this tradition. The *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours* explains:

“At the end of Compline, one of the antiphons, in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is sung according to the season of the year.”

— *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours (GILH)*, no. 92

The custom spread rapidly through the medieval Church. By the 12th and 13th centuries, the four antiphons had been widely adopted, each corresponding to a particular liturgical season. Their texts reflect both theological depth and poetic beauty, expressing the Church’s devotion to the Mother of Christ while always directing the faithful toward her Son.

Over time, the Marian antiphons also became deeply associated with Gregorian chant, the musical language most closely tied to the Roman liturgy. The Second Vatican Council reaffirmed the importance of this tradition:

“The Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as specially suited to the Roman liturgy: therefore, other things being equal, it should be given pride of place in liturgical services.”

— *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 116

For this reason, the Marian antiphons remain among the most enduring examples of chant still widely sung today.

Alma Redemptoris Mater: Advent through February 2

ALMA REDEMPTORIS MATER

The liturgical cycle of Marian antiphons begins with *Alma Redemptoris Mater* (“Loving Mother of the Redeemer”), which accompanies the seasons of Advent and Christmas until the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord on February 2.

The text is generally attributed to Hermann of Reichenau (1013–1054), a Benedictine monk, scholar, and composer whose influence on medieval liturgical poetry was considerable. Despite severe physical disabilities, Hermann became one of the great intellectual figures of his time and composed several hymns that remain part of the Church’s tradition.

The opening line of the chant sets the theological tone:

Alma Redemptoris Mater, quae pervia caeli porta manes...

“Loving Mother of the Redeemer, who remains the open gate of heaven...”

The text reflects themes central to the Advent season: expectation, humility, and the mystery of the Incarnation. Mary is praised as the “gate of heaven” through whom Christ entered the world. The chant draws the faithful into contemplation of the mystery that unfolds during Advent and Christmas: that the eternal Son of God became man through the Virgin Mary.

Musically, the chant has a gentle and contemplative character, reflecting the quiet anticipation

that marks the beginning of the liturgical year.

Ave Regina Caelorum- February 2 through Holy Week

AVE REGINA CAELORUM

After the Feast of the Presentation, the Church turns to Ave Regina Caelorum (“Hail, Queen of Heaven”), which is sung from February 2 until the beginning of the Sacred Triduum.

Unlike some of the other antiphons, the exact authorship of this text is unknown, though manuscripts containing it appear by the 12th century. The chant was widely used in monasteries and cathedral schools, where devotion to Mary was particularly strong.

The text is brief yet profound:

Ave, Regina caelorum,

Ave, Domina angelorum...

“Hail, Queen of Heaven,

Hail, Lady of the Angels...”

This antiphon praises Mary’s exalted role in salvation history while asking her to intercede for the faithful. Its tone bridges the liturgical movement from Christmas toward Lent, inviting the Church to contemplate Mary’s role in the mystery of redemption.

Regina Caeli- Easter Season

The Marian antiphons reach their most jubilant expression during the Easter season with Regina Caeli (“Queen of Heaven, rejoice”).

This chant replaces the Angelus prayer throughout Eastertide and is sung from Easter Sunday until Pentecost.

The text proclaims the Resurrection with joyful repetition:

Regina caeli, laetare, alleluia.

Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia,

Resurrexit sicut dixit, alleluia.

“Queen of Heaven, rejoice, alleluia;

for He whom you were worthy to bear, alleluia,

has risen as He said, alleluia.”

The repeated Alleluia reflects the overflowing joy of the Resurrection. In this chant, the Church invites Mary herself to rejoice because the Son she bore has conquered death.

Musically, *Regina Caeli* carries a buoyant character fitting the Easter season.

Salve Regina Pentecost through Advent

SALVE REGINA PENTECOST THROUGH ADVENT

The final Marian antiphon, Salve Regina (“Hail, Holy Queen”), is perhaps the most beloved. It is sung from the conclusion of the Easter season until the beginning of Advent.

The text, often attributed to Hermann of Reichenau, became widely known throughout Europe during the Middle Ages and remains one of the most recognizable Marian prayers.

Its text acknowledges both the trials of human life and the hope found in Mary’s intercession:

“Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy,

our life, our sweetness, and our hope...”

Unlike the more seasonal character of the other antiphons, *Salve Regina* speaks directly to the pilgrimage of the Christian life. The faithful acknowledge themselves as “poor banished children of Eve” who look to Mary as their advocate before Christ.

For this reason, *Salve Regina* became a cherished chant not only in monasteries but also among the faithful, frequently sung after Mass, during Marian devotions, and at the close of the day.

Sacred Music and the Liturgical Life of the Parish

The seasonal Marian antiphons offer a natural way to deepen a parish’s participation in the

Church's liturgical heritage.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal reminds us that sacred music serves the prayer of the liturgy:

"The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value... Sacred music is to be considered the more holy the more closely it is connected with the liturgical action."

— *GIRM*, no. 41

Similarly, the Second Vatican Council emphasized the formative role of sacred music in the life of the Church:

"Sacred music is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art."

— *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 112

The Marian antiphons embody this principle perfectly. Their melodies are simple enough for congregational participation yet rich enough to sustain centuries of prayer.

Practical Steps for Parish Implementation

Music directors and liturgy coordinators may consider the following strategies:

Introduce One Chant Each Season

Teach the antiphon that corresponds to the current liturgical season.

Use the Simple Chant Tones

The simple settings found in the *Roman Missal* or chant resources are easily learned.

Allow the Choir to Lead

A parish schola or choir can introduce the chant and support congregational participation.

Connect Chant to Catechesis

Brief explanations in parish bulletins or from the ambo can help the faithful understand the meaning behind the chants.

Integrate into Devotions

These chants work beautifully at the conclusion of:

- Eucharistic Adoration
- Marian devotions
- Evening prayer services
- Parish pilgrimages

A Tradition Worth Recovering

For nearly a thousand years, the Church has ended her day with a song to the Blessed Virgin. Monks in medieval monasteries, cathedral choirs, parish communities, and pilgrims alike have raised these same melodies in prayer.

Restoring the seasonal Marian antiphons in parish life is not merely an act of musical preservation—it is a way of reconnecting the faithful to the living tradition of the Church's prayer. In every season of the liturgical year the Church turns instinctively to Mary:

- In Advent expectation
- In Lenten preparation
- In Easter joy
- In the long pilgrimage of Ordinary Time

Through these chants we join the voices of generations of Catholics who have sung the same prayers before us—entrusting the Church, the world, and our own lives to the loving intercession of the Mother of the Redeemer and Queen of Heaven.

CHRISTIAN INITIATION



LEARNING ABOUT MARY THROUGH THE FEASTS THAT THE CHURCH CELEBRATES

By: Joe Milner, Director of the Office of Christian Initiation

Mary is a major figure in the history of salvation. In introducing Mary to those who are not Catholic, one way is to look at the major feasts that the Church celebrates in her honor. And as The Annunciation, Mary, Mother of God, the Immaculate Conception, and the Assumption.

With the Annunciation, the church honors Mary as the one chosen by God to bear the savior. Mary is addressed by the angel as “full of grace” or “O favored One.” God chose Mary for a special role in God’s plan. God is calling her after giving her a special grace and by God’s grace she responds that she is the “handmaid of the Lord.” She consents to what God is asking her. God never forces a person but allows each person to make a choice. In her “let it be done to me” she responds as the exemplary disciple. Mary becomes the model for all disciples. God calls each disciple and God awaits each person’s response.

In the Immaculate Conception, we celebrate God’s gift of preserving her from sin so that she may bear Jesus in her womb. By applying the grace of God to her at her conception, Mary is gifted with God’s life and preserved from the effects of original sin. As proclaimed by the Angel, she may be called “Full of Grace.” This gift prepared her to say yes to God and accept all the joys and struggles of being the mother of Jesus. God also gifts each person and calls them to a unique role in the Body of Christ. These gifts and graces must be nurtured inside each of us. Mary, the Mother of God is celebrated on January 1, the octave day of Christmas. Mary gave birth to Jesus who was both human and divine. God worked through her to bring the savior into the world. Each disciple is also called to bring Christ into the world in their place and time. Sometimes we do not fully understand how God will use us, but it is always for God’s glory.

Mary’s Assumption is a promise to us that God will be faithful to us even in death. In death, Mary was called to share in the resurrection of Christ uniquely before the rest of the human family. Her presence in heaven is a sign of God’s fidelity to us who live as disciples of Jesus. Mary is a reminder to us that it is God who gives life, who calls us each by name, who gifts us with a purpose and the strengths to fulfill it, and who will be always faithful to us even into life everlasting.

RECLAMATION



The veneration of Mary in the Catholic Church encompasses various devotions which include prayer, pious acts, visual arts, poetry, and music devoted to her. Particularly significant is Mary’s presence at the Cross, when she received from her dying Son the charge to be mother to the beloved disciple. Catholics interpret that through the disciple, Christ is giving care of Mary to all Christians.

The Reclamation Center has many visual arts, poetry, and music devoted to her. Come visit the Reclamation Center on Wednesday’s between 9:00 am and 1:00 pm or at our online catalog [HERE](#).



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