

*judgement, you feel yourself drawn into the abyss of despair; in dangers, in difficulties, in perplexities: invoke and think of Mary! Let not the name depart from heart and from lips; and that you may obtain a part in the petitions of her prayer, do not desert the example of her life. If you think of and follow her, you will not go wrong, nor despair if you beg of her. With her help you will not fall or be fatigued; with her protection you will not fear; if she is favorable towards you, you will be sure to arrive; and thus you will learn by your own experience how right it is said: "And the Virgin's Name was Mary!"*

*(From The Office of Our Lady, Vol. 2 (Summer) by the Monks of Encalcat Abbey. London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1962)*

### **Reflection**

When we meditate on the early childhood of Mary, the Mother of God, it is important for us to remember that while one phase of her life was touching time, another phase of it was touching eternity. Jesus, her Divine Son, moved from eternity into time for love of her. Mary, His Mother, moved from time into eternity for love of Him. It is for this reason that prayerful contemplation and a devout reading of the Holy Scriptures—and a faithful honoring of the clearest and most radiant traditions about the Mother of God, given us by those who have loved her through the centuries—will tell us more about her, even as a child, than we can know about any other little girl in the history of the world.

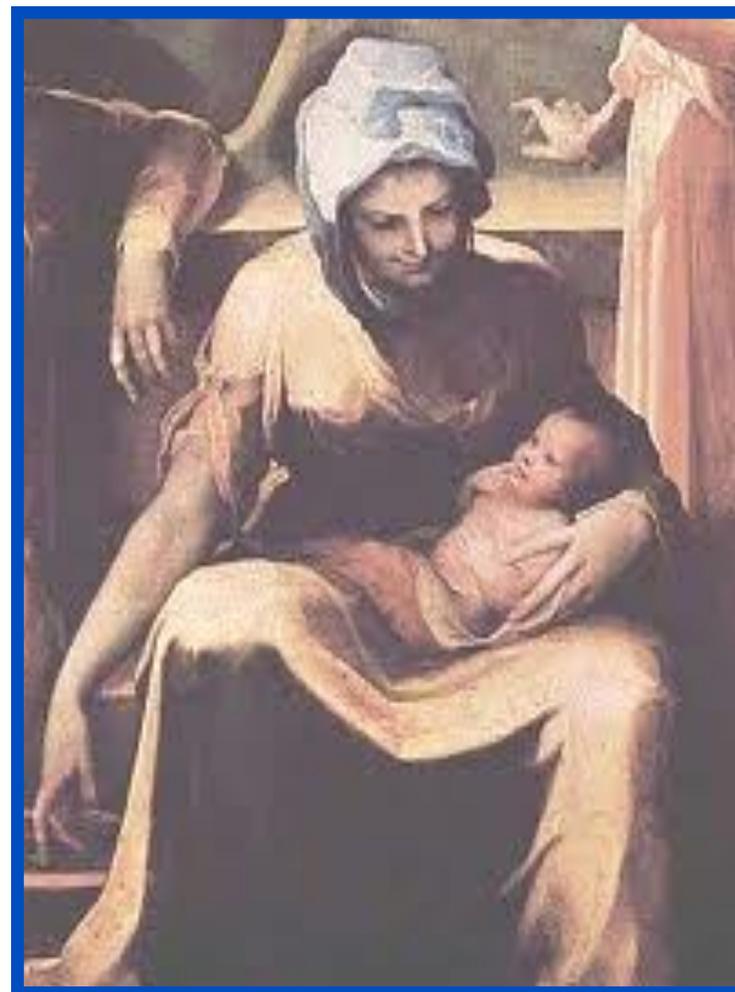


When we think of Mary, the Mother of God, we must remember that it was for her, and in terms of her, that all days, months, seasons and years were made and measured. She was set up in eternity as a standard, and all time was erected and ruled in terms of her life, her deeds, her mysteries, her breath, her heartbeat, the pulsations of her blood. She is chosen as the sun, beautiful as the moon.

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## *Most Holy Name of Mary*

**Feast Day: September 12**



***Saint Anne holding her daughter  
"Mary" Our Blessed Mother***

## ***Most Holy Name of Mary***

As Saint Francis of Assisi says, about the feast of Our Lady celebrated on September 12 and honoring her most holy name, “When I pray ‘Hail Mary,’ the heavens smile, the angels rejoice, the earth is happy...”; Saint Jerome says that Mary means “enlightening”; others have maintained that it means “beloved of God,” “perfect one,” or “wished-for child.”

When Mary was born, her father, Joachim, took his infant daughter into his arms and held her in wonder and admiration. Then, giving her back to Anna, her mother, he knelt and contemplated her for three days and three nights. The radiance and royalty of her presence suggested to him her name, and on the fourth day he chose to call her *Lady*. In his language, Aramaic, that name was Mariam. In our language, English, it is *Mary*. It was bestowed on her on the octave of her nativity. In Hebrew, of which Joachim had abundant remembrances, it was *Miriam*, and means *Star of the Sea*. Our Lady’s birthday is September 8. Our Lady’s name day is September 12.

In accordance with Jewish custom, our Lady’s parents named her eight days after her birth, and were inspired to call her Mary. The Hebrew name of Mary (in Latin *Domina*) means lady or sovereign; this Mary is in virtue of her Son’s sovereign authority as Lord of the World. We call Mary our Lady as we call Jesus our Lord. When we pronounce her name, we affirm her power, implore her aid and place ourselves under her protection.

On this day dedicated to the Holy Name of Mary let us repeat that wonderful prayer of Saint Bernard, responding to Pope Benedict XVI’s invitation to “invite everyone to become a trusting child before Mary, even as the Son of God did. Saint Bernard says, and we say with him: ‘Look to the star of the sea, call upon Mary... in danger, in distress, in doubt, think of Mary, call upon Mary. May her name never be far from your lips, or far from your heart... If you follow her, you will not stray; if you pray to her, you will not despair; if you turn your thoughts to her, you will not err. If she holds you, you will not

fall; if she protects you, you need not fear; if she is your guide, you will not tire; if she is gracious to you, you will surely reach your destination” ‘ (Benedict XVI, address at Heiligenkreuz Abbey, September 9, 2007).

### ***More on the Most Holy Name of Mary***

On this feast day of the Most Holy Name of Mary, here is an inspiring homily by St. Bernard of Clairvaux. It is included in the Matins readings of the day and is part of a larger sermon on the Annunciation:

*The verse of the evangelists ends thus: “And the virgin’s name was Mary.” Let us say a few words upon this name also. The word “Mary” means “Star of the Sea,” which seems to have a wonderful fitness to the Virgin Mother.*

*For she is fitly compared to a star; for just as a star sends forth its ray without injury to itself, so the Virgin, remaining a virgin, brought forth her Son. The ray does not diminish the clearness of the star, nor the Son of the Virgin her virginity. She is even that noble star risen out of Jacob, whose ray enlightens the whole world, whose splendor both shines in the heavens and penetrates into hell: and as it traverses the lands, it causes minds to glow with virtues more than bodies with heat, while vice it burns up and consumes. She, I say, is that beautiful and admirable star, which raised of necessity above this great and spacious sea of life, shining with virtues and affording an illustrious example. Whosoever you are who know yourself to be tossed among the storms and tempests of this troubled world rather than to be walking peacefully upon the shore, turn not your eyes away from the shining of this star, if you would not be overwhelmed with the tempest. If the winds of temptations arise, if you are driving upon the rocks of tribulation, look to the star, invoke Mary! If you are tossed upon the waves of pride, ambition, envy, rivalry, look to the star, invoke Mary! If wrath, avarice, temptations of the flesh assail the frail skiff of your mind, look to Mary! If you are troubled by the greatness of your crimes, confused by the foulness of your conscience and, desperate with horror of*