

Run the Hail Mary play every day!

Well, the **Crimson Tide football team** made us **Alabamians** proud last night by handily defeating the **Michigan State Spartans** by a score of **38 to 0**.

With the **game of Football** on so many people's minds, I'd like to point out ...
an interesting connection between **football** and **our Mass** this morning.

It has to do with a **particular play** that has a **religious name** ... the **Hail Mary pass!**

If you're a football fan ... I'll bet you've heard **that expression** a time or two.

A "**Hail Mary pass**" has come to be known as a **very long forward pass** ... that's made in desperation ... late in the game... and has only a **small chance of success**.

Where did this Play come? What does it mean?

Here's how it came to about.

Back in 1975, the **Dallas Cowboys** were losing to the **Minnesota Vikings** in an NFL playoff game. With **only a few seconds left** on the clock,
Cowboys quarterback, **Roger Staubach**, threw
a game-winning touchdown pass to wide receiver **Drew Pearson**.

When Staubach, a Catholic, was interviewed after the game he said,
"I just closed my eyes and said a Hail Mary."

And from that time on **football fans** ... both Catholic & non-Catholic ... have used the name **Hail Mary pass** to describe a **miraculous catch** at the end of a football game.

Michigan State needed **6 of them** last night ... but that didn't happen!

Today we gather to give honor to **the Mary** invoked in the prayer, "*Hail Mary*".

Yes, last Friday we celebrated **Jesus**, the **Savior of the world**, on His birthday.

And **today** we celebrate **the woman** who brought Him to us, **Mary**, His Mother.

Jesus is God ... **Mary is His Mother** ... **so, Mary is the Mother of God!**

You know, even with **all the nativity sets** that are set up in homes and stores and businesses all over the world, there are **still some people** who have trouble congratulating and honoring **Mary** for her role in bringing **Jesus** into the world.

Some even ask, “*Why do you worship Mary?*”

To which I hope you respond, “*We don’t worship Mary; we honor her!*”

What does it mean to honor?

Well, when Jesus accepted the call from **His Father to become a man, He came to display obedience to His Father’s Law given in the 10 Commandments.**

St. Paul refers to this in our **Second Reading from Galatians saying,**
“*When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law ... so that we might receive adoption as sons.*”

Well, the **4th Commandment** of God’s law is, “*Honor your Father and Mother.*”

The **Hebrew word** for *honor* is “*covotha*”, which means “*to glorify*” ...
“*to bestow whatever **honor and glory** you have upon your father and mother.*”

Jesus, fulfilled that Law more perfectly than any other human could ...
He bestowed His Divine glory upon **His Heavenly Father ... and ...**
He bestowed His Divine glory upon **His Earthly Mother ... **Mary.****

As Christians ... all we try to do ... is imitate Christ!
He honors His Mother with His glory; so we honor her with Christ’s glory.

If the many new Mom’s in our Parish are to be congratulated and honored for being the mother of a child, **how much more is Jesus’ mother, Mary, to be honored for being the mother of ... the Divine Child ... the Second Person of the Trinity!**

And, furthermore, Mary is more than just Jesus’ Mother; she’s our mother too!
For **there** at the foot of the Cross ... **Jesus gave** His Mother to **the whole world.**

So, if Mary is indeed our Mother, then God’s **4th Commandment should be **further motivation** for us to want to honor and glorify her as **Jesus** did.**

There are **many ways** we honor Mary ... with **songs, prayers, litanies, novenas and devotions.** **But our favorite form of honor has traditionally been the Holy Rosary.**

In the **Rosary** we meditate on the **Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries of Jesus’ life**, while we repeatedly pray the **Hail Mary** prayer.

It’s in every **Hail Mary** prayer that we honor Mary by her greatest title,
“**Mother of God!**” We pray, “*Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen.*”

This is the most esteemed title of Mary, the title ... Mother of God!

It's the title used by the faithful from the earliest days of the Church and definitively declared by the Bishops at the Council of Ephesus in the year 431, when Mary was declared "*Theotokis*"; the Greek word that means "*God-bearer*".

**How absolutely special Mary is ... she is the one chosen from among all ...
to bring God to us ... in the flesh!**

This is something that God promised from of old ... to be with us.

For example, in our First Reading tonight from Numbers, God says to Moses, "*Say to them: The Lord let his face shine upon you.*"

And in Psalm 67 we just heard David announce,
"*May God ... let his face shine upon us.*"

And that's exactly what God did when, in the fullness of time, He sent His only-begotten Son to be born into our world to live among us as a human person.

Yes, it was through Jesus' mother, Mary,
that we actually got to see God's face ... shine upon us.

Luke records, "*The Shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph and the infant lying in the manger.*"

Because of this we say, "*the Word ... became flesh ... and dwelt among us!*"

Pope Francis puts it this way: "Mary gave a human face to the eternal Word so that all of us could contemplate him."

He goes on, "*The Flesh of Christ ... which is the hinge of our salvation ... was knit together in the womb of Mary.*"

No other person in the world could ever claim that level of intimacy and privilege ... only Mary!

Which is why she is esteemed above all the Saints in Heaven ... and declared to be Queen of Heaven.

And so, we can do no better than to beseech the help of Mary daily. She is there ... at the right hand of her Son, Jesus, to make intercession for us.

Each time we pray the Rosary, we ask **Mary 53 times for her help...** saying:
“*Holy Mary, Mother of God,*
pray for us sinners, (when?) ... now ... and at the hour of our death, Amen.”

Do you need help now? Absolutely ... we all do ... so why wait until you're in some desperate situation before you call upon Mary for her help.

Just as your biological Mother desires to help you all throughout your life ...
Your **Blessed Mother** in Heaven **desires to help you all throughout your life**, too.

Don't wait till only a few seconds remain on the clock in the game of Life ...
to call upon Mary for help.

Ask for her help every day. Run the Hail Mary play every day!

Just close your eyes and say a Hail Mary prayer!

Remember that **Jesus performed** his First Miracle ... because **Mary** asked Him to.

And **Mary will gladly ask her Son for every grace you need**
to help you find your way to Heaven.

Who is Mary? She is the Mother of God!

Let's **not let our relationship with Mary be ...**
a play we keep in our back pocket to pull out just in times of desperation ...
when time is running out and there's **little chance** of success.

Rather, let's have a **daily relationship with her ...**
a relationship that mirrors the relationship of her Son, Jesus
a relationship of love and honor.

Doing so will keep ... the face of God shining upon us ...
now ... and at the hour of our death. Amen.