

## HAIL MARY

My dear children, today we begin the novena to our blessed Mother Mary. Jesus gave us his mother to be our mother, and I am happy to see so many children present here at this Mass in preparation for the Nativity of Mother Mary.

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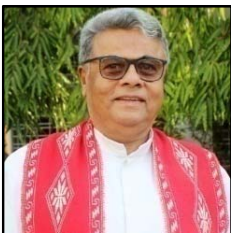
The high five is a modern greeting that we share when we meet our friends. We also know the Indian greeting called the *namaste*, which is done with hands joined and head bowed. It means that 'I see in you the presence of God, and you see in me the presence of God'. We bow to the other person, not because that person is God, but because we honour the presence of God's spirit in that person.

The angel Gabriel greeted Mary with the words 'Hail, Mary', when he came to announce to her the good news that she would be the mother of Jesus. The scripture goes on to say that the angel called Mary the favoured one – the special one. Why? Not because Mary is God; none of us believe that Mary is God. But, because of her openness to God's will, God's spirit came upon her and she gave birth to the Saviour of the world. She is God's favoured one because she said yes to him. She is privileged because God delights in her.

My dear children, do you think God delights only in Mother Mary? Does God delight in you? Is God happy with you? Yes! God is happy with each one of us, especially when we are good. When you go home, you might want to watch TV or play games on the mobile phone, but your mother may be calling you to finish your homework. What will you do?

When we do what is right, we too become God's favoured ones, and we also become the presence of God in the world today. God wants to do for each one of us what he did for Mary, and so, on this very first day of the novena, we begin with the greeting given to Mary, 'Hail Mary' – 'you are hailed because God is with you, and through you, the Saviour will be born in the world'.

Each one of us can be like Mary, the favoured one, the privileged one, not because we are great people, but because God can do great things for us, just like he did for Mary. Dear children, God loves you and wants to make you his privileged ones, if you are good and do what is right. Let us pray at the beginning of this novena, that we may be open to God's will, so that God may delight in us, and that we may be like Mary, hail, full of grace, Amen.



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